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# ETHIOPIA UNDER HAILÉ SELASSIÉ



ETHIOPIA  
UNDER HAILÉ SELASSIÉ

BY  
CHRISTINE SANDFORD

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## PREFACE

THE intention of the following pages has been to put on record the changes which I myself, as an independent witness resident in Ethiopia from 1920 to 1935, and again from 1942 on, have seen and noted. If that record should seem to coincide with the career and achievements of the man who, starting as Tafari Makonnen, is now the Emperor Haïlé Selassié I, it is because the changes which have occurred, and the progress which has been achieved, are the fruits of his vision and perseverance.

For certain information I have had naturally to draw on other sources than my own knowledge and observation, and I should like here to make grateful acknowledgment to the late Mr. C. H. Walker's book, *The Abyssinian at Home*, from which I have filled some gaps in my information on the Law and the Church in Ethiopia. I have also made use of the following publications and acknowledge my indebtedness: Wylde's *Abyssinia*; *History of Abyssinia* by A. H. M. Jones and Elizabeth Monroe; *Unconquered Abyssinia* by Sir Charles Rey; *Ethiopia* by Quaranta; and publications of the Royal Society of International Affairs relative to the Italo-Ethiopian conflict.

My sincerest thanks are due to Mr. H. Stanley Jevons, who has assisted me throughout in the arrangement of the book, and has himself written Chapter XVI, which deals with events outside my experience. It is to him also that I am indebted for the arrangements for publication and proof reading, as I left England before these could be completed; and I am deeply sensible of all that he has done in this respect.

To Mr. Emmanuel Abraham, formerly of the Ethiopian Legation in London, now Director-General of the Ministry of Education, I am indebted for assistance, in particular, on Ethiopian Law, and for his kindness in reading the manuscript. I desire also to thank Miss Lucy Mair for allowing me to read her report of her investigations on the Italian occupation of Ethiopia. Much of my material is gathered from my husband's as well as my own personal experience. The accounts of the campaigns which led to the liberation of the country and the restoration of the emperor to his throne could not have been written without his help. His sword was the inspiration of my pen.

C. S.

ADDIS ABABA,  
October 1945.



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The author is indebted to the British Ministry of Information and to the Press and Information Office of the Ethiopian Government for certain of the photographs.

## THE COUNTRY OF ETHIOPIA

THE 'rivers of Ethiopia' and 'that great river which compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia'; these are among the earliest references to a country which withstood penetration for many decades after the rest of eastern Africa had yielded up its secrets to the white man's inquisitive wanderings. The great central fortress of the uplands, fringed by the desert, cleft by the mighty ravines which are formed by the great river systems of the Blue Nile and its affluents to the north, the Omo to the south, and the Hawash to the east, was a land of mystery, dangerous to approach, difficult to traverse.

Except for the legendary tales of Prester John, the imaginary scenes of *Rasselas*, and the vivid descriptive writings of Bruce, the country itself remained little known until the beginning of the trouble with King Theodore that led to the Napier expedition of 1868. In those days entry into the upland country was a feat of endurance that called for hard physical effort, and, if made for military reasons, a carefully planned expedition. In later years the railway line from Jibuti to Addis Ababa wound slowly in and out of the tortuous stony hills that fringe the coastal plain, and picked its way among the rocks and mounds that are strewn about this howling wilderness. The wild barrenness of the country seemed indeed to shout defiance at the intruder, and the glimpses accorded to the traveller of the Somalis trailing their camel caravans only accentuated the loneliness and silence of the vast scene.

The plateau, which constitutes by far the greater part of inhabited Ethiopia, stands like an island in the middle of this desolate sandy desert. The whole empire covers 350,000 square miles—almost the size of Germany and France together—of which the barren desert fringe to north-east, east, and south-east constitutes quite half the area. Narrowing at its northern extremity to a strip only a few score miles broad, where the western edge of the Rift valley escarpment nears the coast of the Red Sea, the desert plain widens out farther south to include the Danakil and Aussa country. This lies to the north of the railway, which runs alongside the ridge of hills which form a spur of the eastern escarpment. South of these again lies the great stretch of the Ogaden, arid plains sloping

slowly to the sea, over which various Somali tribes have wandered for centuries. Still more southerly the Boran country spreads out north of the Kenya frontier.

The plateau country stands, one compact solid block, to the west and north of this desert fringe, save for the spur extending from the eastern rim of the Rift valley which opens out between the Danakil and Somali country, and along which the railway works its gradual ascent. Descending again to cross the actual floor of the valley by the bridge over the river Hawash, past the lava flows and cone-shaped craters of extinct volcanoes, the railway climbs more abruptly the sharp ascent of the western rim to emerge on the very top of the central plateau at eight thousand feet in Addis Ababa itself. Here it is that the true highland country begins, stretching some three hundred miles north, south, and west of the capital, only falling away again at its most westerly confines to the wide, flat plains of the basin of the White Nile.

Thus any approach to the plateau must be made through regions of intense heat—whether over the dry scorching sands of the eastern desert, or through the sweltering heat of the Nile tributary valleys. It is for this reason perhaps, and from its position on the maps, that the popular idea of the Ethiopian climate is far from flattering, and far from true. Although the uplands lie close to the equator, extending from seven to fourteen degrees north latitude, their height is such that the air is always cool. With an average of eight thousand feet above sea-level this plateau country has a climate resembling that of a warm June at home—fresh mornings, hot in the midday sun, cool again as the afternoon breezes sweep up soon after four o'clock. In the house, or on a shady veranda, it is seldom possible to sit for long without a jersey, and in the winter months, from December to February, although the daytime temperatures are little different from those of May and June, the nights are cold and frosts can be severe, even ice on the streams being not uncommon. Yet by nine o'clock the risen sun has dispelled all taste of cold, and the full glory of a summer's day returns. Nine months of the year are comparatively dry, though the 'small rains'—intermittent thunderstorms—may persist with more or less regularity between February and May. By the end of June the heavy rains of *keremt* have set in, corresponding with the time of the Indian monsoon. Throughout July torrential rain, with a heavy daily thunderstorm, followed by brilliant sunshine, leads up to the wettest month of the year, August, when the clouds may persist throughout the day, bringing a cold Scotch mist, though it is unusual for the sun to fail

to break through at some moment during the day. Then comes September with a slackening of the rain, though heavy storms and hail are still to be expected and greatly feared for the damage they do to the crops, beginning at that moment to come to the ear. The feast of Maskal on 25th-26th September (the Christian Church's 'Feast of the Cross') invariably marks the close of the rainy season, and it is unusual for the day itself to have rain, though for a week or so later light storms may hang about. Throughout October the sun, now between the equator and the tropic of Cancer, is exceptionally hot, and this and a strong south-easterly wind combine to dry up the country in a very short time. Rivers and streams fall from raging torrents to fordable streams; grass lands are ready to yield their hay crop by 15th October, and it must be cut and gathered within the next two or three weeks, or the grasses will dry and scatter their seeds. The crops—barley in November, wheat in December, *tef* (or fine millet) in January—are harvested and thrashed. With the happy advent of the 'small rains' in February (though they are not completely regular) the hard dry ground is softened again enough to enable the primitive native plough to work. Thus in the normal year the climate provides ideal conditions for successful agriculture, as well as for the spells of leisured life so dear to the African.

The dryness of the atmosphere during the fine months is quite remarkable and considerably assists both trader and agriculturist. Meat and fruit keep for a very much longer time than is usual in Africa. The sheep which was killed each week for my household—for most Europeans preferred, if possible, to do their own butchering—would easily last out the week if hung, secure from flies, in an ordinary meat safe; milk would stand forty-eight hours; soft fruits could be transported long distances without great loss in quality; the household wash was away and finished within a few hours. Yet, in many ways, the dryness could be trying, and the winds of autumn as hard on European skins as the winds of winter in England: the nervous strain which is so frequently attributed to altitude is just as probably due to this lack of moisture in the atmosphere.

While on the plateau itself this temperate climate prevails, in the deep valleys made by the three great rivers and their many tributaries the heat is tropical and the humidity considerable. Within a few miles one can pass from the ice of the upland stream and the cutting winds of early morning on the frosty plains of Salalie to the steamy warmth of the African jungle with its palms and tree-ferns.

to take a dip in the warmth of the Muger river pools a few miles above its junction with the Blue Nile. These great chasms in the volcanic crust of the plateau are from two thousand to four thousand five hundred feet deep, and are like the great cracks that one may sometimes see in a child's sand castle on the shore. Climate, vegetable and animal life are as different as if one had stepped into another continent. Instead of the hare, the fox, the buck of the highland plains, one may see the lion, the hippopotamus, the buffalo, and the crocodile.

Though animal life has been much diminished by the number of rifles at the disposal of the native inhabitants, almost all kinds of African wild life may be met with in the Ethiopian empire. Lions are abundant and have been encountered even among the heights of the Arussi mountains. The leopard is so numerous that his skin forms an important article of export; so does the secretion of the civet cat, needed on the European market to form a foundation for many scents. There are many different species of wild cats, and the hyena abounds even in the roads around the capital. The author remembers well the occasion when, after a night made hideous by the snarling of some fifty of these creatures, the stains of blood on the stones of the pathway just beyond the garden hedge were the only signs of the victim over which they had been quarrelling—skin, flesh, bones, all other traces of the unfortunate cow, who had strayed from the shelter of the byre, had gone: and this happened within two miles of the centre of the town.

The traffic in ivory in the frontier provinces was an important one, and in some cases the provincial taxes to the central government could be paid in tusks. Many kinds of antelope and gazelle are to be found throughout the whole country, plateau and desert, and one species, the nyala, is peculiar to Ethiopia. Another uncommon creature to be found is the aardvark, or earth-pig, whose long, sticky tongue shoots out to swallow hundreds of ants at a time. Wild pig are also common, but following the Jewish tradition these are unclean food to the Ethiopian Christian, who must also abstain from web-footed birds for the same reason. There are plenty of these, wild-duck, and all kinds of water fowl, including some of the finest species of crane, as well as flamingo and marabou. The blue goose is one of the rare birds to be found on the streams in the upland country. In the rainy season the bird life is peculiarly rich and varied: near Addis Ababa the snipe breed in the marshy plains of the Saluta, while the bustard, or wild turkey, and numerous guinea-fowl provided many an English Christmas dinner before

the influx of foreigners in the last twenty years introduced their domestic counterparts.

The difference between the vegetable and tree life on the plateau, in the steamy valleys and out in the arid desert, is, of course, very clearly marked. Though the acacia is common all over the country, the species vary considerably, the blossoms of the trees at the lower altitude being far more brightly coloured than those of the trees above. There are plenty of other flowering shrubs which brighten and scent the woodland paths throughout January and February. Wild jasmine, and a kind of bush (St. John's wort), are among the most common, together with beautiful creepers of periwinkle blue. The flowering time for the majority of wild plants is the three months of the rains, when the upland plains are covered with white lilies, wild montbretias, and many of the small creeping plants which we associate with the downlands of England, wild thyme, bird's-foot trefoil, and yellow rock-rose. As the heavy rains abate, patches of blue delphiniums show up against the grey outcrops of rock and by the end of September these and the yellow *mashal* flower cover the hillsides with a wealth of colour, blue and gold against the patches of grey and black lava rocks. A little later come the aloes with their greenish spiny leaves and tall spikes of red blossom. Many of these herbs and flowers are used by the people as seasonings and perfumes, and the flowers of a large shrub known as *andod* make an excellent lather in which the most delicate fabrics can be washed.

I have written mostly about the flora of the plateau country as being the best known to me, but the hotter parts of the country do not lack their colour of tree, shrub, and flower. The acacias of the lower levels have beautiful pink and yellow blooms, the latter being most delicately scented. In the lanes which lead up to the town of Harrar the cactus hedges are covered with a beautiful red creeper—something of the colouring of our Virginia creeper at home—while the yellow flower of the prickly pear peeps out beneath.

The possibilities of gardens, both flower and vegetable, are endless. Almost every English plant does well at the eight thousand feet altitude. Roses—which also grow wild as at home and are the national flower of Ethiopia—grow in the greatest profusion; arum and amaryllis lilies, sweet peas, gladioli, which also grow wild, and violets, all these fill the gardens in the months following the rains, whilst verbena, antirrhinums, and lupins continue the riot of colour during the drier months. Although the Ethiopians themselves make little use of green vegetables except a rather coarse

form of kale, there is scarcely a vegetable that does not do well in the upland country. Tomatoes grow like weeds and a delicious addition to the garden produce is the wild asparagus which grows freely in the woods, being most prolific in the north and in the country round Lake Tsana; bunches of this, sold us for a farthing for twenty-four heads, were a delicacy to which we looked forward each rains, just as we 'id to the mushrooms which we gathered by the kerosene-tinful all through July.<sup>1</sup> In the north also we found yams, or sweet potatoes, while gourds and calabashes are grown all over the country both for food and also to be used when dry and hollowed out for many different household purposes. The one vegetable common all over the country, though it grows and ripens best at the lower altitudes, is the red pepper or chili, many varieties of which are grown. This is used in almost every cooked dish, to a degree which makes them almost inedible to any European who has not acquired the hardihood of palate and digestion necessary for their enjoyment. In almost every upland village will be found a little mound of rich earth covered with tobacco plant; for, although the Emperor John forbade his subjects to smoke foreign cigarettes, the Galla peasants enjoy their large hookah pipes, though I have never seen any Amhara using one. The introduction of cigarette smoking and the establishment of a cigarette factory in Addis Ababa is a direct result of Italian influence.

Fruit is not commonly grown nor much eaten—indeed, except in European gardens little is to be found, except limes and a large and unpalatable citrus fruit called the *trungo*. Some very hard peaches, suitable only for cooking, seem to have spread over the country, and blackberries, more red and yellow than black in colour, can be found growing freely in some districts. Pomegranates and bananas, too, are common in the warmer altitudes, and in some parts of the country, as in other African states, the stem of a fruitless variety of banana tree known as 'insett' is used for making bread. But in general use for this latter purpose are the *tef* (millet), wheat, and barley which are grown all over the plateau, while maize supplies the needs of the people who live at the lower altitudes.

The bread in most general use is of a curious texture, being comparable to an enormous, rather thin crumpet. The edges of this are broken off and rolled round the vegetable or meat curries which are the daily midday meal, and which are usually served on to the centre of the 'crumpet.' Sugar cane is grown freely in the

<sup>1</sup> Paraffin oil, known in America as kerosene, is marketed throughout the East in tins holding four gallons which, when emptied, are applied to all manner of purposes.—Ed.

warmer valleys, but is rarely used except in its raw state to chew. Honey, which is plentiful, is used to sweeten coffee and to make a kind of mead called *tej*. It is quite possible to grow foreign fruits with success. On our own farm strawberries and plums did well, while oranges and lemons, bananas, pawpaws, passion fruit, and pineapples flourished at the lower altitudes. There will be, no doubt, a considerable future for such agricultural activities when local demand has been stimulated and transport facilities improve, as is likely now that an impetus to roadmaking has been provided.

Enough has been said to show that the climate and the fertility of the soil are well adapted to agriculture of the most varied kind. Apart from foodstuffs, large quantities of coffee and cotton are grown. Coffee forms an important article of export, while the hay harvest is extremely valuable both to private owners and the government.

The coffee plantations round Harrar have been extended, in the twenty years since European enterprise has been welcomed by the present emperor, to include large concerns under Belgian management in the Chercher and Arussi mountain districts. These have been increased since the Italian occupation, and most of their large-scale attempts at colonization have been in these areas. The 'long-berry mocha'—the name given to the celebrated Harrar coffee, is well known and appreciated, and a large export trade in this has been in existence through the port of Jibuti for many years.

In other parts of the country, namely Jimma and Kaffa (whence it has been suggested that coffee originally took its name), and on the promontories round Zeigi on Lake Tsana, a wild variety, inferior in quality, grows in the shade of the forest trees. Though they do not actually sow this, the inhabitants cultivate and tend the bushes, and there is a large trade in it, a great deal going to the Sudan and Egypt, where it is preferred to any other type.

There is not enough cotton grown for it to have, at present, any commercial value, but it is used locally to weave into the soft white *shammas*, or loosely woven sheets, which are much more highly prized than the imported machine-made article. It is probable that raw cotton, under careful cultivation in the districts already envisaged as suitable (and there are several), may yet become an important article of trade.



## II

### THE PEOPLE

FROM our brief survey of the country of Ethiopia itself, let us turn to the peoples—the very diverse peoples—who live there. Its geography has helped to make its history and to mould and colour its people. The barren burning deserts that fringe the central plateau, the complexity of mountain ranges and river chasms that isolate province from province, making intercommunication slow and arduous, the variety of temperature and rainfall that endow it with so many different fruits of the earth, all these physical features have assisted its independence, diversified its inhabitants, endowed them with qualities of vigour and self-reliance, and at the same time imposed upon them the corresponding drawbacks of lack of cohesion and co-operation, of over-confidence and arrogance. All these, true of centuries of her history, are equally true of the Ethiopia of to-day. There are over thirty languages, exclusive of dialects, spoken among the peoples of the Ethiopian empire; and indeed in their ways of life, their customs, their religions, their very colour and appearance, the different races are of infinite variety—*habeshi*, a medley—and the Arabic word has survived in the name of Abyssinia.

They may be divided into four main classes, of which the first, the Amharas, have become the ruling race, and their language, Amharic, that of the emperor and his court. Their Christian religion marked them out through the centuries as distinct from all other African peoples, and is indeed the cause of much of their strange history. They inhabit the northern provinces of the empire, Tigré, Amhara, Gojam, and part of Shoa, an area equal to about one-third of the country.

To the south and west of this Amhara bloc live the Gallas, invaders from the south who overran the country during the sixteenth century and settled in it, only to be reconquered themselves in successive wars, and finally incorporated in the empire by the Emperor Menelik. They had by then extended towards the north, driving a wedge between the Amharas and the Danakil. Their powerful king, Negus Mikael, was one of the chief generals in both the Emperor John's army against the dervishes, and Menelik's army which fought the Italians. It is inaccurate to speak of the Galla

people as a bloc hostile to, or separate from, the Amharas. Although in origin and language a distinct racial type, there is no political cohesion among the Gallas. During the past five hundred years, indeed, the forces both of war and peace have been welding Galla and Amhara into a unity which comprises all the people of the highlands, who are agriculturists by nature and by circumstance; and it would now be difficult to draw any definite line, whether political or geographical, to separate them.

Much mischievous talk is loosely put abroad about the disunity of these two peoples, and the Italians were at pains to exploit it to their own advantage. It is possible for a Galla to rise to the highest positions in the empire, ability being the only criterion. The Empress Manen is herself a granddaughter of the Galla Negus (King) Mikael. There are parts of the plateau where Galla and Amhara live side by side without any trace of inequality, and if, in the outlying provinces, the old form of provincial government allowed the Amhara official to oppress the Galla peasant, this was not so much a racial distinction as the bad result of the old regime of tax-farming and the extortion of the tax-gatherer. It was steadily disappearing under the new schemes for provincial government initiated by the emperor. Our neighbours on our own farm were Gallas, who lived on equal terms and held equal rights with the Amharas who owned land in the district: there was no question of racial distinction or oppression. Some of them also owned land in the Arussi mountains, several days' journey away, a stronghold of the Galla race where many of them are wealthy; and they would divide their time between the two properties, passing freely between them.

Among other inhabitants of the highlands must be mentioned the 'guragies'—a name which in the capital itself has become synonymous with coolie, owing to the fact that they are willing and able to perform the hardest manual labour, and so are always employed to undertake work—as sweepers, water-carriers, porters—that the Amhara or Galla servant refuses to do. To move house, to sink a well, to take one's piano out to a dinner party, as we were once asked to do, a call outside the gate, 'Guragie, guragie,' will produce a band of these accommodating workmen, whose only drawback is their method of extorting a maximum wage. They will sit down in the gateway if dissatisfied and for the remainder of the day, if need be, will reiterate a monotonous chant, 'Abét, abét,' until their demands are satisfied.

Bands of guragies come to Addis Ababa at the close of each

rainy season. They work for several months in the capital, living in companies together under some self-chosen leader on next to nothing. At the first sign of rain they leave again with their year's earnings to till their own fields and grow their crops while work is slack in the capital. Colonel Sir Charles Rey in his book *Unconquered Abyssinia* mentions an interesting theory that these people, living by themselves in their own small enclave between the roads to Jimma and the lakes, are the descendants of a colony of European slaves, planted there by the Egyptians in far-off times to work some copper-mines which existed there. Certainly in appearance they are quite different from Galla or Amhara, being taller and fairer in complexion. They speak their own language and are partly Mohammedans; but in the war of 1935–6 they fought for the empire against the Italians.

Another group must be mentioned here, the distinction again being one of religion as well as of race. The Falashas, or Abyssinian Jews, live in the district round the highest of the mountains of Ethiopia which lies north-east of Lake Tsana. Numerically small, their prowess at one time as fighters was considerable and they even seized and held the throne for a period. They still practise the Jewish religion with all its rites and ceremonies, and some of their own as well; but it is interesting to notice that they know no Hebrew and that their scriptures are in the Geez language of the Ethiopian Church. They are also manual workers, chiefly skilled as smiths and workers in iron. They live in their own communities apart, and though they came from the north, groups of them are found all over the country. In Addis Ababa they have a special school of their own and avoid close contact with their fellow Ethiopians. They look upon themselves as Jewish exiles, and a return to the Promised Land is part of their religious belief; but they are believed to be non-Semitic in origin, though the name Falasha means exile, and they are of different racial extraction from the other peoples of the plateau, being probably of Cushite descent.

The third large class to which reference has been made earlier, comprises the desert peoples of the east, the Danakil, and of the south-east, the many tribes of the Somali. Entirely different in origin, features, customs, and habits of daily life from the peoples of the plateau, these nomad tribes never owed more than a nominal obedience to the central government. Their loyalty is to their immediate chiefs, and for the most part they have always followed their own customs unheeded and unchecked. Both men and

women, with their spare and graceful figures, are quite unlike their more sturdy, and stouter, fellow citizens of the plateau. Their camel caravans may often be seen from the railway lurching through the stony deserts of Gildessa, the lank forms of the Somali tribesmen plodding beside them; the Somali women with their print dresses and scarlet cotton wraps, bent under the burdens on their backs, but stepping out, as only nomad women can, to cover the miles that stretch between one camping ground and the next. It seems inconceivable that people can live their lives out in such a waste country, and under such a burning sky. The tents are made of camel's-hair fabric stretched on a wicker-work frame, and everything rolls up easily to make a cumbersome but not a heavy load.

The population of these regions is of course very sparse, and the Somalis' northern neighbours, the Danakil, are still less visible or accessible. One may occasionally see a warrior leaning on his spear, naked save for the girdle round his waist, contemplating the train as it lumbers by, and possibly estimating the spear-heads that could be made out of a length of rail—for the lines constituted a frequent source of supply for these fierce warriors, of whom little was known until the two journeys undertaken in recent years by Mr. Nesbitt and Mr. Thesiger. Of these two desert peoples the Danakil are by far the more savage. A description of these people and their country is to be found in Mr. Nesbitt's interesting book, which gave for the first time detailed knowledge of this unknown and unfriendly region. The Amhara governor in whose province these people live, seldom, if ever, descends to the plains over which they wander with their flocks and herds; the caravans that occasionally find their way across the low country are careful to keep together, for stragglers seldom find their way back to camp.

The Danakil warrior acquires merit by the killing of a man: and the more human trophies he can exhibit the higher, place will he take in the social hierarchy of the tribe. It is probably not accurate to say that he must kill a man before he marries, but the more victims he can claim the more rings can be added to his knife or spear. The warrior who returns from a raid without a visible proof of his prowess is covered with ridicule and publicly shamed. Yet Dr. Warqney C. Martin, when governor of Chercher, in the northern half of which province these people lived, made some contact with them; and he told me that they remitted their yearly tribute with regularity, acknowledging, if not subservient to, the Ethiopian suzerainty.

The Somalis, the other large group of these tent-dwellers in the

coastal plains, are far more numerous, and are divided into many different tribes, among which the Esa Somali are perhaps the least developed of a very virile and warlike race. These border on the country of the Danakil, whom they closely resemble. Both being warlike people, there were constant intertribal raids which, as neither side recognized any boundary, African or European, might and did lead to those frontier incidents which were magnified into major international complications unless there were tolerance and goodwill on both sides.

To the south-east of Hairar the long scrub-covered plains of the Ogaden country stretch far and wide. The various Somali tribes, each under its own leader, with their flocks and herds, camels, goats, sheep, and long-horned cattle, pass from one barren waste to another, eagerly seeking out the water-holes, which may often mean life or death to their animals and themselves. Here lie the wells of Wal Wal which were used to justify the aggression of a European nation against an African empire, though all the world knew the flimsy nature of the pretext. The Anglo-Ethiopian commission was indeed at that very moment settling similar problems to that of Wal Wal, British and Ethiopian commissioners working together to draw a line on the map that could never be drawn in the minds of the people who live there. Their governments knew well the rule of give and take that must prevail in such areas and under such conditions.

There remains one more great group of peoples. Conveniently termed Shankalla, they are the real blacks, of the warmer hills and valleys in western Ethiopia that slope down from the plateau country to the White Nile Basin. They are people of innumerable different tribes—speaking different and little-known tongues, devoid of political purpose or unity, the prey, through their paganism, ignorance, and lack of co-operation, of the more closely confederated highland tribes; and also possessed of a docility and, perhaps, also as a result of centuries of slave raiding, of an apathy that is hard to awaken to action. It was indeed one of the problems facing my husband in his work as adviser to the governor of Maji that so many of the tribes accepted stoically, apathetically, the role of the under-dog and were unwilling to protect themselves and their families or to make any co-operative effort to do so. They not only failed to combine, but they carried on their own quarrels regardless of their danger, raiding for cattle and slaves among themselves, and laying themselves open as easy prey to the slave trader. For the bribe of a few rifles he would acquire the victims he desired,

and then move on to the next tribe to carry on the same business. This will be discussed more fully in a later chapter.

Here then are the varied constituents of the Ethiopian empire —named not inaptly by the Arabs who came into contact with them, the ‘medley,’ and as far back as the Old Testament ‘the mingling of the peoples.’ They have never so named themselves, and though the terms and territories are in no way synonymous throughout history, they greatly prefer the name by which their own kings have been known since the record of their history opened in far-off days.

It is only courteous that we should now accept and put into use the name Ethiopia, just as we have done in the case of Iraq and Iran in the last twenty years.

### III

#### VILLAGE LIFE

It is the history of the upland peoples—the Amhara and the Galla that makes the real story of Ethiopia. It is therefore their customs, surroundings, modes of life and of thought that this brief survey relates. They constitute by far the greater part of the people. They are almost all agriculturists, living in districts where the rainfall is sufficient to ensure a regular harvest, though the crops that they grow vary considerably according to the height and the corresponding climate. Roughly speaking, the villages begin at a height of rather more than four thousand feet above sea level (excluding the actual railway stations at lower altitudes on the line which attract groups of houses to their vicinity) and may be found as high as twelve thousand feet and more on the central plateau. The villages are built on no particular plan, and the material used for the houses varies according to the district. In the warmer climates where tropical plants are grown, maize stalks often form the outer wall of the hut which is then covered with a thatch of coarse grass. The whole somewhat untidy structure looks as if a blast of the 'dust devil'<sup>1</sup> would pick it up and fling it into the air. In general the huts are circular, though the richer man in the higher districts may decide to build himself an oval structure with a straight roof to connect the two circular ends. As the altitude rises temperatures are lower, and the hut becomes a more solid affair; and up at the average central plateau height of eight thousand feet the ordinary peasant's house had become an affair of wattle and daub.

Here the surrounding wall is of stout wooden uprights. The most durable are the split trunks of the juniper trees which abound in the upland forests. These are proof against white ants. They are sunk to a depth of some eighteen to twenty-four inches in a circular trench, usually about twenty feet in diameter. Every eighteen inches they are bound together by a ring of strong withies threaded in and out of the uprights, and the whole is finished off with a strong enclosing band of the same at the top.

<sup>1</sup> A whirlwind which carries a column of dust up several hundred feet or more. Small whirlwinds occur frequently in the hot dry country.—Eo.

When this wall frame is finished the roof is added. The framework of this, a spider's web of thin bamboos and thin branches, is prepared on the ground, and when firmly fashioned is pushed and pulled with much shouting and merriment into position on top of the wall. The thatching next takes place. A particular kind of coarse grass, which grows to a height of some four feet, is gathered—or bought in the grass market in town. The laden donkeys who bring it in present a curious sight as they trot along, looking like small haystacks on legs with only the donkey's eyes and nose protruding. They are very awkward to meet when the road narrows and the bank is steep on either side. The thatch is then finished, and in a well-built house will be some ten to twelve inches thick, and neatly and tightly packed as in good thatching in England. If the owner is poor it will be more sparsely and loosely arranged with ropes and wooden slats tied down over it to prevent the winds from blowing it away.

Then the mudding begins. Some days previously a patch of liquid mud mixed with fine millet straw will have been prepared alongside, and left to ferment until it is just of the right binding texture. Then it is carried out in bamboo baskets to within a yard of the wall and thrown on in handfuls until the outer surface is covered. Meanwhile a good deal will have been thrown through the interstices to protrude on the inner surface of the hut. This is allowed to dry hard and in a few days' time the same process will be repeated from within. The interlocking wall of mud, perhaps eight to ten inches thick, will form a good solid barrier against the cold winds that blow at night across hillside and plain. A well-made house will undergo a further process of smoothing, for which more liquid mud mixture is prepared and worked over the rougher surface with a flat, wooden 'iron.' Such a house constructed with good timbers, well-muddled and thatched, will stand, as ours did, for twelve years without any other repairs than a partial rethatch after the first six years, and a new mud facing every two or three years on the side most exposed to the weather. The driving rain of the three months' thunderstorms was heavy on a mud surface that was unprotected by overhanging eaves. We objected to these as darkening our windows, but the Ethiopian, who has none, allows his eaves to overhang so much that the rain never reaches his mud wall, which stands for many years without needing repairs. Inside the hut living conditions are primitive. Partitions are sometimes arranged by hanging up *shammas*, or some grass matting, across one corner of the hut to make some attempt at

privacy. But this is not usual and in general the family, their dependants and their servants, if they have any, live, eat, and sleep together.

There is neither chimney for the fire nor windows for light or air, but this matters less than might appear in a climate in which for the better part of the year the Ethiopian can meet his friends, transact his business, or bring his case to the judge, all in the open air. He will, for fear of the evil eye, go indoors to eat if he can, and if he is compelled to eat outside he will carefully shield himself from observation with his cloak or *shamma*—the white cotton sheet, some three to four feet broad and ten feet long, which he uses as a Scottish shepherd uses his plaid.

Round each cluster of thatched mud huts stand the granaries in which the year's supply of grain for the family and animals is kept. Curious inverted cones of dried mud these are, supported on wooden props, with small thatched roofs; and alongside them are the piles of dung fuel collected by the women and children from the fields and shaped into flat cakes with mud and straw. Very cunning is the arrangement of the pile, whereby the inner cakes are withdrawn first while the outer ones form a good waterproof covering in wet weather.

So each little village lives, self-supporting if need be, with its daily needs around it—simple fare of bread, dried peas or beans, and home-brewed barley beer; home-spun clothing from home-grown cotton, primitive wooden ploughs and yokes from the neighbouring forest. It is perhaps this self-sufficiency that has kept the peasant population of the uplands so unconcerned with the outside world, so blind to everything but the local quarrels and rivalries in which it finds interest and delight. The men go out to sow, to plough and weed the fields; the women often help them in the weeding and gleaning of the crops. The women fetch the water and fuel; they grind and cook and brew. The children herd the cows and goats and scare the birds from the crops. Each little community knows little of what is happening the other side of the next range of hills, except for the news they may glean from the traveller or trader.

Very biblical are some of the common scenes of their daily life—the women gathered at the spring, the sower casting his seed, the oxen patiently circling as they tread the corn, the chaff blown aside by the wind as the furious flat wooden spoons, big as a spade, throw it into the air. The weekly excitement is the local market—there are no shops, and both men and women walk several miles

to exchange the small bundle of onions, or the bag of lentils and peas, and the week's gossip.

The affairs of the village are in the hands of the *chikka shum*, who collects the local dues, the government tax, as well as customs duties on the roads, and directs the communal labour which is due, usually, one day in ten, from the *chesagna* (tenant) to his landlord. He may have four or five villages under his control and will decide local disputes, read out government proclamations in the market-place, and preside at civil marriages. It is interesting to note that a woman may hold the office of *chikka shum*.

The history of land tenure in the Ethiopian Empire is not unlike its history in other parts of the world. Communal ownership of one sort or another, owing to social and economic development, is giving place to individual rights of ownership or occupation, and the whole process has been disturbed from time to time as the result of conquest. As in other parts of the world, privileged classes have emerged; large tracts of land are owned, tax free, by the Church, by hereditary chiefs and by men who have served past emperors well. Soldiers and others, who on mobilization for war had duties to perform for the Government, were granted land, tax free, in lieu of wages, or were allotted *gabars*, or tax-payers, in recently conquered territories who had to supply them with grain and perform other services for them. This last practice, conveniently but erroneously known abroad as the gabar system, was open to grave abuses and was abolished by the present emperor soon after his return to the country in 1941. It is the policy of the Government to get rid of special privileges as far as land is concerned, compensating the losers in some other way. Soldiers and government employees are now paid salaries. The policy will no doubt be carried out with discretion, due regard being paid to local susceptibilities. Church lands will be touched last, and in fact it was found necessary on the return of the emperor to restore its privileges to the Church in modified form in order to provide subsistence to the clergy.

In general it may be said that up to the present it is the unwritten customary law of the country, subject to variations in different areas, which controls the system of land tenure and which is invoked in the settlement of land disputes. On the other hand the principle of individual rights in land is being rapidly accepted and adopted throughout the empire, even more quickly in the Galla lands of the south than in the north; and, once adopted, these rights are specifically protected by Article 27 of the constitution,

which lays down that 'except in cases of public utility determined by law, no one shall be entitled to deprive an Ethiopian subject of the movable or landed property which he holds.' It would perhaps be hardly true as yet to describe individual rights in land as absolute ownership, but they are something more than rights of occupancy. Many of the lands throughout the empire are registered and a large number measured in the traditional rough and ready manner. When the time comes for an accurate land survey, no doubt individual rights in land will be finally and fully established.

The principal taxes on land are the land tax and tithe. These were formerly paid in kind, but are now in general paid in cash. It is the intention of the Government to unify these two taxes and other small imposts connected with the land into a single tax, and legislation is already in draft for the purpose. Taxation in general is light; and hardship, where it arises, is due not so much to the amount of the tax as to abuses or inconvenience in its collection.

A class of tenant farmers exists throughout the country, who pay rent in kind to the landowner, generally one-quarter of the crop, and also pay the tithe due to the Government. The landowner himself generally pays the land tax. The tenant farmer can be ejected at will by the landowner, but in practice this is not done without sufficient cause.

This then is the picture of the peasants of the plateau: equally applicable both to the Gallas and to those Amharas of the north who resisted the Galla invasion and held fast to their own. These Amharas, the dominant class, whose language, script, customs, and habits are influencing the rest of the Ethiopian empire, are, as might be expected, proud and jealous of their position, but insufficiently educated to provide, as yet, a fully civilizing influence. Less industrious than the Galla peasants, they possess a higher degree of intelligence which inclines them rather to the role of merchant or soldier of fortune than to daily work in the fields.

There is no doubt that among the diverse peoples of the Ethiopian empire none are so capable of bearing responsibility and maintaining their position as the Amharas and Tigréans, and it is these two related peoples who under skilful and competent leadership have made themselves masters of the country. Of their Christianity I shall speak later, but one aspect of it has an important influence on their whole outlook. This is the position which the women occupy in the household. The Christian Ethiopian recognizes in his wife the partner in his family and property. He discusses affairs

with her and will often defer a decision until he has had her opinion. The law recognizes her as part owner of the household, and in case of divorce, property and children are divided between the husband and wife. This is in startling contrast to the position of the Moslem wife; and it has, by reaction, a deep effect on the women themselves. They share their husbands' interests, they take part in much of the political scheming that is rife, their minds are alert, and they are quite as ready as the men to take advantage of educational assistance and as competent to profit by it. Though women do not appear at the great feasts at which the emperor and his chiefs entertain their soldiers, it is quite customary for them to appear in public, and they take part in public worship, though they must enter the church by a separate door and stand apart from the men.

The conditions of life as above described will seem primitive enough for a nation which boasts contact with Jewish and Egyptian civilization as far back as the days of Solomon. It is indeed true that they have remained curiously aloof from, and uninfluenced by, the progress of western Christianity along the paths of culture and comfort. Little literature, except some ecclesiastical writing and the *Chronicles of the Kings*, has been produced by this old-established race. Literacy itself outside the ranks of nobility and the Church was rare before the Emperor Hailé Selassié gave the impetus which now urges the youth of the country to seek schooling wherever it may be found. Though the churches are elaborately painted with biblical scenes and portraits of saints and martyrs, these are frequently the work of foreigners who have adopted the conventions and primitive designs of Ethiopian art. Nor are these truly indigenous—such art as exists dates from the time of the Portuguese infiltration and is of foreign origin. Creative power has still to be stirred to life. In the realm of music there is more evidence of national individuality. Apart from the free chants which are part of the church services, both inside the churches and at the several outdoor festivals, there are many popular choruses and national songs which vary in different parts of the country; and minstrelsy—the extempore praise of great men and their deeds—is a practised art. Instruments are, however, very primitive and only used as accompaniment to singing and dancing.

It is a natural question to ask why a people who have maintained so strong a national tradition throughout the centuries should have produced so little external evidence of the national spirit. The contribution which Ethiopia has made to civilized man's

inheritance is far from obvious. Yet it is not non-existent. We must respect the picture of this island of primitive Christianity, surrounded by the encroaching waves of Islam and paganism, beset by the southern invaders under Mohammed Gran, by the insidious persuasiveness of the Portuguese Jesuits, by the fierce onslaughts of the dervishes of the Mahdi, by the greed of imperialist Europe, by the wanton aggression of twentieth-century fascism, and yet emergent as an empire still. In spite of its imperfections, its backward ways, it has a Christian emperor who believed it his duty, on setting foot once more in his own country, to include in his proclamation of 20th January 1941 an admonition to his people as to the merciful treatment they should accord their enemies, as follows:

'I reason with you to receive with love and to care for those Italians who fall into the hands of Ethiopian warriors, whether they come armed or unarmed. Do not mete to them according to the wrongs which they have committed against our people. Show that you are soldiers of honour, with human hearts. Do not forget that, because the soldiers of the Adowa campaign brought to their emperor the Italian prisoners, that has been to the honour and good name of Ethiopia.

'Especially do I ask you to guard and respect the lives of children, women, and the aged.'

## IV

### FIRST CONTACTS WITH EUROPE

THE legend which traces the descent of the kings of Ethiopia to the union between the Queen of Sheba and King Solomon is too well known to need repeating. The dynastic loyalty of the Ethiopian people is based largely upon this conception of their origin. The legend is symbolic of the origin of that large and dominant section of these diverse peoples, the Amharas—a Semitic tribe with a knowledge of Jewish legend and law, which at some time in the dark ages made its way into the uplands of East Africa, to mingle its blood indeed with that of earlier inhabitants and later invaders, but to keep inviolate its faith, its script and language, and its independent status—a nucleus round which others might group themselves for security, or be gathered as the fruits of conquest.

But the legends and the confused history of the Middle Ages are of little interest or significance for the general reader. For the purpose of the present book the history of the country must begin with its first important conflict with a European power—those events which led to the Magdala expedition of Sir Robert Napier in 1868. From that date Ethiopia was set upon the map of Africa, although it was not for another twenty-five years that its boundaries were enlarged to the present extent, and acknowledged by treaties with three great powers.

The first contact of the Ethiopians with a European power—excluding the missionary enterprises of the Portuguese, which, though widespread during the seventeenth century, were short-lived—was an unfortunate one. The Emperor Theodore, whose sanity was at times in question, had, as the result of an unfortunate oversight of the British Foreign Office, come to loggerheads with the British. A letter he wrote to Queen Victoria had travelled no farther than the files of the Foreign Office; and the royal writer, incensed at the lack of appreciation shown by the absence of any answer, took vengeance on two British subjects for the supposed slight. Captain Cameron, the British consul, and Mr. Rassam, his would-be rescuer, were thrown into prison, and all diplomatic efforts failed to effect their release.

At that time, this was reason enough for Great Britain to go to war. Lord Napier was instructed to proceed to the interior of

Abyssinia, to release the victims, and to mete out punishment. The task was admirably carried out. The Emperor Theodore, faced with certain defeat at Magdala, committed suicide; and the British force having accomplished its mission retired in 1869, as promised, with the rescued captives, and left the country to its own tasks and turmoils.

The defeat at Magdala, however, paved the way for future contacts less untoward. Theodore was succeeded by King John, whose troubled reign was spent in conflict with rival claimants to the throne, with Italian aspirations to dominance in the northern provinces, and with the ever-increasing danger of dervish pressure from the Sudan. Establishing himself successfully above his rivals, who included the future Emperor Menelik, King John inflicted a signal defeat upon the Italians at Dogali in 1887, only to perish himself in 1889 in battle with the dervish hordes at Metemma in western Ethiopia.

His successor, Menelik II, was a worthy heir to the military valour of John; and at the same time, happily for Ethiopia, was possessed of intelligence and shrewdness sufficient to meet on equal terms those European powers who were at that time fully embarked on the scramble for Africa. He announced *urbi et orbi* his succession to the throne; and from that moment sought by every possible means to enlarge and establish the frontiers of his domain, which during his kingship of Shoa he had already extended to cover considerable territory in the south and west. He conducted several successful campaigns against the Gallas, who had taken the advantage of troubles in the north to assert their independence. He negotiated terms with the Mohammedan Sultan of Jimma, whom he left to govern his country as a vassal of the Ethiopian empire; and he overthrew the power of Egypt by the defeat of Emir Abdullah at Harrar and the absorption of Harrar province into the empire under the governorship of his able general, Ras Makonnen.

Yet Menelik saw clearly the fundamental weakness of his so-called empire—that disjointed collection of territories upon and around the plateau of Ethiopia, which it was henceforth his main ambition to weld together for their common safety. The preoccupation of Egypt with the Mahdist troubles had thrown into the hands of the Ethiopian leader the rich province of Harrar which lay alongside his previous conquests of Galla country. The victory over the Italians in the north had made Tigré and the northern provinces secure; and Menelik proved himself well able to hold what he already had. He believed indeed that his reach should

exceed his grasp. 'I shall endeavour,' he wrote, 'should God of His grace grant me the years and the strength, to restore the ancient frontier of Ethiopia as far as Khartoum, and to Lake Nyanza beyond the lands of the Galla.' He defied the Italians, who interpreted the treaty of Ucciali, which he had signed with them in 1889, as having granted them a protectorate over Ethiopia; and, rejecting their claim to control his relations with foreign powers, began to go ahead with his own plans for the consolidation of his empire on progressive lines.

The grant of a concession to a French company for a railway to the coast which would materially assist the Abyssinian export trade, was his next move. Meanwhile he worked with vigour at the military reorganization of the country, and when in September 1895 he found himself threatened by Italian rivalry in the north, he was able to put into the field troops from Amhara and Gojjam, his own Shoan soldiers, Galla cavalry, men from Tigré, and a contingent of Harrari troops under his faithful general Ras Makonnen.

The campaign ended with the Ethiopian victory at Adowa in 1896, and after this the reign of Menelik entered a new phase. Independence was assured and his immediate task was the delineation of the frontiers of his empire, the organization and centralization of authority, and the formal recognition by the European powers of the existence of Ethiopia as a political entity. At the same moment he had to face the more difficult work of reducing and controlling the power of the old hereditary governors, or *zases*,<sup>1</sup> of stimulating the productive capacity of the country, and of creating an army on which the central authority could rely. This was a vast programme, the full realization of which could not be compassed in the short term of active life permitted to the prematurely ageing emperor.

Yet the ten years which passed between the battle of Adowa and the Tripartite Agreement of 1906 by which Great Britain, France, and Italy recognized the independence of Ethiopia, while reserving to themselves the right to protect their own nationals in case of need, were to see considerable achievements. The ground-work for reform was laid, the country was pacified and united; a new capital, more central in relation to the empire than Gondar had been, was established at Addis Ababa and its railroad to the sea planned. The position of Ethiopia was defined among the nations. The emperor, taking warning from the assertions of the Italians that the Treaty of Ucciali implied protective rights, showed

<sup>1</sup>The word *ras* is pronounced with the 'a' long, as in 'rather.'—ED.

himself 'consistently jealous of his sovereign rights as an independent ruler,' though he was keenly alive to the value of trading relations and civilizing contacts with the European nations.

The European powers, between 1896 and 1906, had established permanent diplomatic representation in Addis Ababa, and these legations received a cordial welcome from the emperor. It was unfortunate that he found himself unable, largely because the right men were insufficient, to accredit his own representatives to the European governments. These would have enabled him to receive first-hand information of affairs and the trend of public opinion from men of his own choosing, and might have gone far to check the mutual suspicion and intrigue that inevitably arose. He contented himself, however, with sending missions of courtesy to the European capitals. The mission to London and Paris was entrusted to Ras Makonnen, father of the present emperor, and indicates in part the influences which determined the Ras to give his son a better education than was customary amongst the nobility of his country.

The Tripartite Agreement of 1906 between Great Britain, France, and Italy, guaranteed the maintenance of the *status quo* in Ethiopia, the non-intervention of the three powers in her internal affairs, and the integrity and independence of her empire. The convention was communicated to the emperor in July 1916, and the long delay before his answer in December indicates his apprehensions. Then he wrote: 'We have received the arrangement made by the three powers. We thank them for their communication and their desire to keep and maintain the independence of our government. But let it be understood that this arrangement in no way limits what we consider our sovereign rights.'<sup>1</sup>

Thus was the position of Ethiopia guaranteed and her ruler acknowledged. Had the soldier Menelik been succeeded by the reformer Hailé Selassié, progress would have been continuous, and the mismanagement and anarchy of the few years that followed Menelik's death would not have provided the fruitful soil on which grew the weeds of reaction and obstruction.

But the regency (1910-13) of Menelik's consort, the Empress Taitu, a woman of forceful but unscrupulous energy, necessitated by Menelik's mental incapacity, was followed by the three years' misrule (1913-16) of the degenerate Lij Yasu, grandson to Menelik through his daughter, and his successor designate to the throne. Both undid much of the work of the great emperor. The young

<sup>1</sup> Jones and Munro, *History of Abyssinia*, p. 153.

ruler's habits of indolence and intemperance, together with his leanings towards the Moslem faith, lowered his country in the eyes of the Europeans and aroused the most bitter opposition among the large Christian population of north and central Ethiopia. It was in 1916, as the leader of the Shoan nobles in their fight against this betrayal of Ethiopia and her faith, that we first see the figure of Ras Tafari Makonnen, the future Emperor Hailé Selassié, emerging into the light as regent for the newly chosen Empress Zauditu, and heir apparent to the throne.

## V

## RAS TAFARI MAKONNEN

Over these Abyssinians —this medley of diverse, often-warring peoples—the Great Menelik established his authority, so that even now to swear by Menelik is to pledge an oath. He conquered them, converted them, and combined them into an empire. Who would answer the challenge to govern this empire when its founder died and his successor betrayed his trust?

To the soldier succeeded the statesman; in place of the grim, powerfully built warrior, there stood forward a small man, finely made, with a keenly intelligent face, watchful eyes, and the hands of an artist. Ras Tafari Makonnen, to give him the name by which he was known in early life, was the grandson of the daughter of Sahlé Selassié, King of Shoa from 1813 to 1847. The Emperor Menelik was a grandson on the male side of the same Sahlé Selassié, so that Ras Tafari's royal rank was no less than that of his predecessor, though descent was through the female line.

Of a family of eleven, Tafari Makonnen and his elder brother Dajaz Ilma alone survived the perils of infancy. In a boating accident on Lake Haramaya the present emperor was the sole survivor, his six companions being drowned. Thus the fates would seem to have exercised rigorous selection in their choice of Menelik's successor.

Ras Tafari's father, Ras Makonnen, was one of the most valued and trusted generals of the Emperor Menelik. He had travelled as emissary from the latter both in Europe and in the East, and was anxious that his son should be able and fitted to make contact with western civilization, and to take an interest in the innovations introduced by foreigners into his country.

Studying first his own language and religion under the direction of a priest, Ras Tafari also received instruction from one of the French fathers at Harrar, and later came up to Addis Ababa where he became pupil at the school instituted by Menelik in the capital. His attainments were significant and we are told that the emperor noticed with satisfaction that the boy was endowed with 'a broad outlook and fine judgment,' and that his future was full of promise. 'Possessed of an acute and inquiring mind, and

tireless industry, Ras Tafari set himself constantly to acquire fresh knowledge of the world and of men and affairs.<sup>1</sup>

The life of a young man of good birth at the court of the Emperor Menelik would resemble in many ways that of the esquire of mediæval days in England, sent to court to finish his education in the train of some nobleman of, say, the court of Edward I. He would meet the leading figures of Ethiopia, be present at talks and discussions, hear judgments given in the *chilot*, or appeal court, examine the reports brought in from the provincial governor, get caught up in the web of political and personal intrigue—in short, would gain that experience of men and affairs which has given the present emperor that shrewdness, tolerance, and human insight which are an integral part of his character.

The young Tafari Makonnen remained at court until his promotion, at the age of seventeen, to the important governorship of Sidamo, one of the richest provinces of Ethiopia. There he gained experience in a country rich in agricultural resources and active in trading enterprise, coffee being one of the main crops. The province, not many years previously, had been unified by the conquering Amharas, who had subjugated the many small warring kings of the district. The young governor would find plenty of scope for his energy in developing one of the most profitable parts of the country.

The death of his father in 1906, followed only one year later by that of his elder brother, gave him the chance to carry on the same work, for in 1910 he succeeded Ras Makonnen and his brother as governor of Harrar Province. His wise and energetic administration earned for him the affection of its inhabitants, and gave the district the prosperity and well-being that are still to be seen in it to-day. It was during this governorship that the Emperor Menelik died and bequeathed the throne to Lij Yasu. Imbued with an intense patriotism, disgusted with the excesses of the young reprobate on the throne, intellectually head and shoulders above his contemporaries, Ras Tafari Makonnen at the age of twenty-three must have already foreseen the role for which he was cast.

Eager to find things out for himself, he was during these years of apprenticeship constantly at work making his contacts, searching for experience of men. He was a frequent visitor at the British consulate at Harrar; he took an active interest in sport; his early study of French stood him in good stead in opening up to him a field of literature of which he made good use. He was

<sup>1</sup> Colonel D. A. Sandford, *Near East and India*, 1934.

all the time, no doubt, dreaming his dreams and preparing for the future.

It was in 1916, when he was twenty-five years old, that his chance came. Menelik had died in 1913; and within a few months Lij Yasu had so mismanaged affairs that the gloomy prognostications that the passing of Menelik would lead to the breaking up of the empire seemed likely to be speedily fulfilled. The Shoan chiefs took matters into their own hands. Tafari Makonnen himself took the initiative in directing the operations which led to the overthrow of the, as yet, uncrowned emperor—an old superstition had induced Lij Yasu to postpone and avoid a coronation ceremony—and to the proclamation of Zauditu, daughter of Menelik, as Queen of King of Ethiopia. His own part in these operations required not only swiftness of decision and action, but also personal courage of a high order.

Commanded by Lij Yasu to surrender the governorship of Harrar and to go to Kaffa, Ras Tafari came up to Addis Ababa, but delayed his departure to his new province. Meanwhile, Lij Yasu went down to Dire Dawa and Harrar, where, after toying with the Mohammedan leaders, he finally announced his conversion to that faith. Ras Tafari was asked by the other Shoan chiefs to remain in Addis Ababa. He did not primarily intend to drive Lij Yasu from the throne, but was determined to defend the Christian faith—that faith so jealously guarded for centuries. The reforming party gathered their forces in Addis Ababa, and while Lij Yasu was paying an unexpected visit to Jibuti, combined to prevent his return to the seat of power. The Church—a powerful influence—was shocked at the tales about the young king, and was persuaded easily enough to disallow any loyalty to a ruler who denied the faith of centuries.

The new government was acclaimed by a great crowd in the centre of the city, and by the greater number of the chiefs. Lij Yasu saw no way of regaining the capital and his throne but by force of arms. He left Harrar to go up to his father, Negus Mikail of Wollo, who offered him fifty thousand men; an initial success was scored at Ankober over Ras Lal Segued, a partisan of the reformers. The War Minister, Fitaurari Hapte Giorgis, thereupon left Addis Ababa at the head of some thirty-five thousand men to check an advance upon the capital. Placing his infant son in the care of the British minister in Addis Ababa, Ras Tafari joined him with additional reinforcements, and the rival parties met in battle at Sagallé in December and fought for ten hours. The issue was decisive, but

costly. Eleven thousand men were killed and wounded, of whom some eight thousand were of Lij Yusu's force. The ex-ruler himself escaped to wander among the Danakil tribes for the next five years, but was finally rounded up and captured after a bloodless victory in 1921.

The new government was formally and publicly recognized by the three great powers. Zauditu, Menelik's daughter, was crowned empress in 1917, with Ras Tafari as her counsellor and regent, and as her successor to the throne.

## VI

## REGENCY

The position thus achieved by Ras Tafari Makonnen, that of regent and heir to the throne, he was to hold for twelve years, a time of great difficulty and exasperating inaction. The councillors round the empress were old men, opposed to progress and reform, and therefore in fierce antagonism to the regent. He was a man of progressive ideas and therefore dangerous; every effort was made to render him powerless.

The balance of power was, however, kept between the opposing parties by the War Minister, the Fitaurari Hapte Giorgis, who had assisted in the defeat of Lij Yasu at Sagallé, and who controlled the army. He was determined to prevent civil war. Not that Ras Tafari looked to war for the furtherance of his schemes. Essentially a man of peace, he devoted this period mainly to reading and reflection, to preparing the ground, to planning for the future.

It must be remembered that, before the Italian invasion, the time of his unfettered control as emperor was less than half the period through which he had had to sit inactive as regent—clear evidence of his patience and tenacity. He bided his time, deliberately stifling the promptings of his own ambition, seeing that the situation was bound to change in his favour with the death of the Fitaurari and content to wait for the moment. The world, judging him by his enforced mildness in internal affairs, began to forget that beneath that surface there was a man of proved courage who could act with decision.

Not that Ras Tafari sat idle. As far as he was able to he was making ready the ground for future action, and as an instance of his methods we may notice his work for education. The regent realized that no scheme of reform could be put through without a nucleus of young educated men who could form the civil service of the future. In the teeth of opposition from the old Abuna Mattewos, the Coptic Archbishop of the Ethiopian Church, who was suspicious of progress in any form, Ras Tafari introduced reforms into the already existing government school, encouraged mission schools of all denominations, built and equipped the Tafari Makonnen school and sent a number of young men to Europe, where they were given university education or a technical training

as lawyers, doctors, engineers, and so forth. He imposed a special educational tax on goods passing through the customs; but, in the main, the large sums expended came from his own private purse. He took a close personal interest in the boys, and by personal contact instilled into them his own conceptions of duty and patriotism. The Educational Commission to East Africa, financed by the Phelps Stokes fund, visited the schools at Addis Ababa in 1924. A stock question put by the members of the commission to the boys was: 'What made you wish to come to school?' The answer was in substance invariably the same: 'I wish to fit myself to serve my country.'

It was with such preparation for the future that the regent had to be content during the waiting years. Residents in and around Addis Ababa between the years 1920 and 1930 saw many changes—small, but significant. Public executions—a spectacle of morbid interest to European sightseers—were abolished, and the old tree of execution outside the cathedral of St. George was cut down. Roads inside the capital, along which the author jolted in a Victorian barouche on arrival at the station in 1920, were cleaned, widened, and metalled, so that whereas in that same year there was only one car to be met on the roads (a present from the Italian Government to the empress!) by 1930 it was possible for any one who could pay the fare to take a taxi from one end of the town to the other.

The old city gates were removed, the centre of the town cleared up and laid out, and here and there stone buildings began to rear their two or three storeys alongside the wattle-and-daub houses, and ramshackle tin huts, which together with booths and open stalls constituted the shops of Addis Ababa. It was impossible to buy even a safety-pin in 1920! In 1930 dresses, *nouveautés* from Paris, knitting-wool, books, and photographic material were all easy to come by. These are small things, but significant of the progress of material comfort.

The emperor was also interested in the development of agricultural schemes, and was keenly anxious to improve the native strains of cattle, mules, and horses. Some of the students sent to complete their education abroad were allocated to this branch of study.

Social reform also began to play its part in the regent's schemes. He showed himself exceptionally friendly to the two first hospitals of Addis Ababa—the Menelik Hospital under French management, and the newer American Presbyterian Mission Hospital at Guleli

on the outskirts of Addis Ababa. For this he provided the site, and in its initiation and development took a keen personal interest, even attending operations in person. His youngest daughter shared her father's interests.

A little later he personally built, endowed, and staffed the Beth-saïda Hospital close to his own palace, chose the Swedish surgeon, and his nursing staff, and was a constant visitor to hospital and operating theatre.

He was at pains to mitigate the horrors of the old civil prison in the capital, with its heavy toll of typhus (jail fever); and the new prison, completed when he became emperor, bears witness to his humanity.

To this period also belongs the tour of European capitals which he undertook in 1924. For the first time an Ethiopian reigning prince crossed the sea when he made a short trip to Aden in 1922—and to the horror of his staff enjoyed a flight in an aeroplane. Later he visited Egypt, France, Italy, Belgium, Luxemburg, Switzerland, Sweden, Great Britain, and Greece, and from his journeys he acquired first-hand knowledge of western administration, of factories, hospitals, and schools—in short, of all the means whereby a nation becomes strong and healthy, equipped for its share in the progress of civilization.

Ras Tafari could speak a foreign language fluently: he had studied the progress of western civilization: he had made the 'grand tour.' The realm of foreign affairs was therefore held to be the one in which his energies could expend themselves, without detriment to, or disturbance of, that internal conservatism which suited so well the rival elements in the three-cornered contest. It was moreover a field in which he himself was interested, as successor to the throne, and from which his more far-seeing mind could see the approach of possible danger.

He had studied the Treaty of Versailles, and was quick to realize that in the discussions prior to it, and in the various committees set up under the League of Nations, humanitarian questions were receiving a large share of attention, and in particular the question of the slave traffic. This was a danger-point, and the regent foresaw the possibility of foreign interference—and forestalled it.

In 1923 Ethiopia made formal application for admission to the League of Nations. Though there was some discussion as to the advisability of allowing the entry of a state whose internal condition was alleged to be unstable, the opinions of Italy and France in favour of admission prevailed against those of more cautious critics.

Great Britain, Norway, Switzerland, and Australia favoured delay, pending investigation.

The admission of Ethiopia as a League member on 28th September 1923 was a triumph for the regent's policy of opening contacts with the West; and at first the results amply justified his opinion that he was providing her with a safeguard against foreign interference.

It was in the autumn of 1925 that the usefulness of the regent's success became apparent. It has always been the policy of the British Foreign Office to subordinate other British interests in Ethiopia to the question (of paramount importance to Egypt and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan) of the waters of Lake Tsana. Following this policy, the British took the initiative in reopening proposal, originated by Italy in 1919, for an agreement between the two powers on the question of spheres of influence. In return for the promise of Italian assistance in negotiating with the Government of Ethiopia to gain the right to erect a barrage on the Lake Tsana outlet, and to construct a motor road from there to the Sudan, Great Britain agreed to withdraw from any competition with Italy in the development of north-west Abyssinia, and to help her to acquire the concession mentioned in the Tripartite Agreement of 1906, of a railway to the west of Addis Ababa, connecting Eritrea with Italian Somaliland.

The two parties signed the exchange of notes in December 1926, and in accordance with their obligations as members of the League, published their contents. The regent was quick to see and resent the action of the two great powers in thus interfering with the property of the Ethiopian people, without any effort to consult them, and appealed to the League for protection against such discourtesy. He gained his point. The two offenders hastily disclaimed any intention of infringing the sovereign rights of a fellow member to dispose of her own concessions, and the regent, having insisted that his protest should be published alongside the notes, was content to do no more. He had very properly administered a deserved reproof and had shown, by his protest and the way in which he presented it, that statesmanlike dignity and moderation which he was to display later in his appeals to the League, when invasion threatened and took place.

After the admission of Ethiopia to the League the regent added his signature to the Kellogg Pact in 1928, and followed up this policy of friendly contacts by signing a treaty of perpetual friendship proposed by Italy, the only one of the three great powers

from whom he felt he had anything to fear in the way of territorial aggression. This provided that 'There shall be constant peace and perpetual friendship between the Kingdom of Italy and the Abyssinian Empire.' Practical results of an economic character were sought by an annexe which gave to Ethiopia a bonded warehouse in the port of Assab, in southern Eritrea, subject to the construction of a road from that port to the town of Dessie, which was to be a joint enterprise of the two signatories.

Such were the regent's activities in the field of foreign affairs. The death of the Abuna and Fitaurari Hapte Giorgis within a few months of each other in 1926 marks the end of the period of patient preparation with which he had had to content himself for so long on the home front. The forces of reaction seemed to be melting away, and Ras Tafari took steps from this time forward to hasten their disintegration. He assumed forthwith for himself and his nominees, the governorships of the dead Fitaurari, and effected the banishment of the *echiguié*, or chief monk, whom he realized as the equal, in reactionary influence, of the dead Abuna. He succeeded in obtaining the mastery over Dajaz Balcha, perhaps the most powerful of his antagonists after Ras Hailu of Gojjam. Dejaz Balcha, who was governor of Sidamo, received a summons to the capital, a summons which he chose to disregard. A more peremptory message followed and this time the Dajazmach thought it prudent to obey. He arrived in Addis Ababa, however, or rather on the outskirts of the town, at the head of an army of ten thousand men, and ensconced himself in his own house some eight miles from the heart of the city. This was an obvious challenge to the regent, who acted with vigour. He invited the Dajazmach to come to a banquet the following day, even acceding to his stipulation that he should arrive with a bodyguard of some six hundred armed retainers. The banquet was held, the conversation was animated, each protagonist seeking to justify his own position. The Dajazmach rode away again unpersuaded. But a surprise and shock awaited him. As he neared his own property he found the compound deserted, his army evaporated into thin air. In his absence the regent had sent his own men to persuade the provincial soldiers that it was in their own interest to go home without further ado; their immediate interest was satisfied with a present which would see them provided for during the journey—and the advice was followed. Dajaz Balcha recognized the adroitness of the manœuvre which had outwitted him, and though he sought sanctuary for a few days in a neighbouring church, he was persuaded to give himself

up. After retiring to a monastery for some years he presented himself for service again at the time of his country's peril and was reinstated as a member of the Council of Ministers. There is no animosity in the character of the emperor. Balcha died in 1937, fighting for his country in the outskirts of Addis Ababa some time after the Italians occupied the capital.

The reactionary party realized that their position was fast becoming untenable, and within two years of these latter events a conspiracy was formed to depose the regent from his trusted position. It failed, and in October 1928 this failure of the Palace Revolt, as it came to be called, finally established Ras Tafari in his position, and advanced him to the rank of Negus (king). Its story will give an additional picture of his steadiness in danger, and his power of quick decision, if the emergency demand it.

The regent had gone down, as was his almost daily custom, from his own house—the little *ghibbi*—to the palace in which state affairs were conducted—the big *ghibbi*. Hardly had he set foot within the hall when the gates of the palace were closed behind him, and held closed by troops within. Machine guns, posted on the roof of the Menelik mausoleum, which stands within the wall of the palace enclosure, were trained on the entrances. Within, the empress was questioning the regent on rumours reported to her, that he was aiming at supreme power. Disposing scornfully of such allegations of disloyalty Ras Tafari maintained complete self-possession in the face of the threatening soldiers of the palace guard. Ordering the great doors of the *ghibbi* to be thrown open he passed out and down the steps of the assembly hall. The force of his personality held the crowd. Outside the main gates there had already arrived retainers from his own palace who had been hastily armed with any weapons which his wife, Waizero Manen, who had been apprised of the situation, could lay hands on.

The gates were opened at his orders; his own servants poured in; in the silence of surprise Ras Tafari mounted his mule and rode slowly towards his own house; his calm confidence had won the day.

Two days later, at 6.30 in the early morning in an impromptu but impressive ceremony, he was crowned Negus. As he placed the crown, offered him by the empress, on his head, the swords of the surrounding chiefs flashed from their sheaths in unanimous acknowledgment. The forces of reaction in the capital were crushed. Strengthened in prestige as well as in actual power, the newly crowned Negus hastened to dispose of the last of his active

opponents, Ras Gugsa, the former husband of the empress, who had refused to acknowledge him as king. He had raised the standard of revolt in the north, -doubtless with the secret connivance and assistance of the Italians, who were beginning their intrigues against the Ethiopian Empire.

Again the Negus acted with decision. He dispatched his troops northward, made use of the only aeroplane he possessed to drop propaganda leaflets in the disaffected province, and within a month had put down the revolt. Ras Mulugeta, the Minister of War, who commanded the forces, met Ras Gugsa on 30th March 1930, in the Wadela district, and after a fierce encounter the rebel leader was defeated and killed on the battlefield. The news reached Addis Ababa the same day, and doubtless precipitated the death of the empress, already seriously ill with diabetes. Two days later, on 2nd April 1930, Negus Tafari Makonnen became Negusa Negust (King of Kings) of Ethiopia, and founder of a new dynasty under his baptismal name of Hailé Selassié. The coronation took place six months later, on 2nd November, and the very importance and number of foreign representatives emphasized to all that the empire of Ethiopia was set even more firmly on the map of Africa and among the nations of the world.

## VII

### HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY

*'The Lion of the Tribe of Judah hath prevailed.' Hailé Selassié the First,  
Elect of God, King of the Kings of Ethiopia.*

So ran the motto and titles of the emperor at his coronation on 2nd November 1930. What kind of man was this Emperor Hailé Selassié? Who were the kings among whom he was supreme?

A message reached me one evening in December 1920, when we were expecting the regent and some of his officers to dinner. 'Will you kindly arrange some dancing during the evening? His Highness would be interested to see European dancing.' A week or so later an invitation was brought me by one of the *ghubbi* servants. 'Would you kindly come and have tea with Waizero Manen this afternoon. Her children have received a box of toys from London, and the regent would be interested to see how the mechanical contrivances should be used by his children.' We spent an amusing afternoon, enjoying those toys quite as much as the children did. A few weeks later we were asked to dine—'and please bring your piano with you. Their Highnesses would like to hear some European music and singing.' It was done: guragies were called in to shoulder the piano, and preceded by it, we rode out to dinner and a pleasant evening of music and dancing.

I could enumerate many such incidents, and they bear out a sentence which I have quoted earlier from a character sketch of Hailé Selassié published in 1934: 'Possessed of an acute and inquiring mind, tireless industry, and a broad outlook on life, Ras Tafari set himself constantly to acquire fresh knowledge of the world, and of men and affairs.'

These are trivialities mentioned above: but the acute and inquiring mind could absorb and utilize every new experience, trivial and serious, and it was this broad yet critical intelligence that attracted the attention of the Emperor Menelik towards the son of his most able general, Ras Makonnen.

Lij Tafari Makonnen, to give him his earliest title, was the great-grandson, through his paternal grandmother, of the Emperor Sahlé Selassié, whose long reign (1813–47) was a useful and prosperous period in the stormy history of his country. His father, Ras

Makonnen, was the Emperor Menelik's right-hand man, and his death in 1906 while still a comparatively young man was a deep grief to his royal master. Lij Tafari's mother, Waizero Yeshimabéit, died three months after his birth, and he himself was the sole survivor of her numerous family. Born at Harrar on 23rd July 1892, his early education was entrusted to a priest, Aba Samuel, for religious and Amharic instruction, while he studied French with the Catholic Mission in Harrar. This language, which he learnt to speak fluently and with great accuracy, has naturally influenced his reading and general sympathies. But in later years he mastered English and now enjoys reading English books while, since his residence in England, he has learnt to speak it with comparative ease.

The desire for experiment of every kind calculated to further the development of the country's natural resources, the energy with which each scheme was personally examined, the eager enthusiasm for every new idea laid before him, once he was convinced of its desirability—all these, which have in time been modified by experience and checked by greater knowledge, bore witness to his real and active zeal for the progress, economic, political, and spiritual, of his country. Such zeal made enemies as well as friends: but there was no doubt of the loyalty of the band of younger men whom he himself had trained and educated to be the first means to his hand of carrying out the reforms he had visualized so long.

A sympathetic and courteous host, as a guest the emperor showed all those qualities of interest and appreciation that won the hearts of his personal friends. Whether on the racecourse, where he entered his own horses in friendly rivalry with those of the foreign legations, or merchants in the town, or on the farm which he had ridden over thirty miles to visit, or in the doctor's house at the hospital where he had walked through every ward, he showed himself an alert and intelligent questioner as well as critic, diffusing enthusiasm and evoking loyal service.

Who then were his peers among whom, before his accession, he was *primus inter pares*, and who, as the imperial crown was set upon his own brow at the coronation ceremony, raised their coronets to set upon their heads?

A certain distinction must be drawn between those *rases* or chiefs who, members of old and noble families, held their fiefs by inheritance as well as by the appointment of the Crown, and those whose tenure was the reward solely of service as either soldier or administrator or both. Generally speaking, the old semi-hereditary

siefs were those in the northern provinces of Tigré, Amhara, and Gojjam, where the scions of the old Amhara and Tigréan families held sway in a number of larger or smaller governorships. The provinces of the south and west—the results of conquest or reconquest by Menelik—were more often allocated to men who had distinguished themselves in the public service.

At the time of King John's death in 1889 there had only been one serious rival to Menelik, King of Shoa, when he advanced his claim to the imperial throne. This was Ras Mangasha of Tigré, a natural son of King John. In the face of Menelik's powerful Shoan army, however, he did not advance his claim. His son, Ras Siyum, who succeeded to his father's domains, was given the title of Ras, which is not hereditary, by Negus Mikail of Wollo, the father of Lij Yusu, as the price of possible assistance to the latter when faced by the Shoan chief's revolt. Ras Siyum was for some time Governor of Adowa and Makalé, and though he was detained for some time in Addis Ababa with the title of '*conseiller à la cour*' during the regency of the present emperor, the marriage of his daughter Welete Israel with the Crown Prince Asfa Wassen silenced any suspicion that his loyalty was in question. Indeed, at the time of the Italian invasion, Ras Siyum fought with gallantry against the enemy, and only submitted when resistance was hopeless. When his chance came, he and his irregulars assisted General Platt to encircle Amba Alagi and force the Duke of Aosta's surrender.

A nephew of the same Ras Mangasha of Tigré was Ras Gugsa Arya, whose title had been conferred on him by his step-mother, who became Empress Zauditu. He died at Makalé in 1932. Although his son, Hailé Selassié Gugsa, was confirmed in his father's domains and was given the emperor's second daughter in marriage—she died a year later—he played traitor at the opening of the Italian campaign, going over to the enemy with some of his soldiers. He was captured by General Platt's army in 1941 and is at present a prisoner of war in the Seychelles.

An outstanding personality among these hereditary chiefs was the figure of Ras Hailu of Gojjam. Reputed to possess great wealth, an eager negotiator and hard bargainer, an amusing talker, and a generous host, Ras Hailu kept great, if primitive, state at his capital at Debra Markos. Separated from the capital by the great chasm of the Blue Nile valley, with no bridge nearer to Addis Ababa than two hundred miles, and for four months of the year no ford, this powerful chief was accustomed to use his authority as a somewhat

uncertain weight in the scales of internal peace. His arrival on the scene when Ras Tafari took the field against Lij Yasu in 1920 had caused the latter to throw up his hand, when it became evident that he could not rely on the assistance of the Gojjam leader. From 1920 to 1930 Ras Hailu ruled his province with vigour, and unmolested. He accompanied the regent on his European tour, and together with all the chief *rases* was present at his coronation in 1930.

Whether he was disappointed at failing to secure the title of Negus or whether he saw his chances of independent sovereignty fading in the light of Hailé Selassie's policy of weakening the power of the *rases* in favour of the central government, is not known. But in 1932 he was involved in a foolish and half-hearted attempt to reinstate Lij Yasu, who had escaped from confinement; and he was deprived of his governorship and condemned to death—a sentence which was later commuted to imprisonment for life. He was set free at the time of the Italian invasion; but again he failed in his loyalty to the crown and was reinstated by the Italians, to whom he had submitted earlier, after the Gojjam revolt in 1937. He made his submission to the emperor when his Italian allies were defeated and at the time of writing is under detention in Addis Ababa.

Among the younger and more progressive of the *rases* was Ras Desta Damtu, who married the emperor's eldest daughter, Princess Tenague Worq, and was governor of Sidamo. He was keenly interested in the economic development of this rich province, being himself a large exporter of coffee, and had already made considerable efforts to open up trade and better communications with the Somalilands and Kenya. He took command of the army of the south, which after stubborn fighting was defeated by General Graziani in 1936. Ras Dasta was taken prisoner by the Italians and shot as a rebel in 1937.

Ras Kassa, who is himself of royal descent, is among the group of elder statesmen who have for many years formed a kind of council of state round the emperor. He has from time to time held provincial governorships, and his own hereditary fief of Solali, and is a man of great repute in ecclesiastical knowledge.

Ras Imeru, a cousin of the emperor, who had succeeded him in his governorship at Harrar, was another of the younger men who was outstanding both by ability and birth. He was chosen to be governor of Gojjam in succession to Ras Hailu. A man of sound and progressive views and of tried courage, he had too short a

tenure of office in Gojjam to effect reforms. He remained in the country even after the emperor had left in 1936, and was finally taken prisoner by the Italians and sent to Italy. His release was effected by British and American troops in 1943 and he returned to Ethiopia in November of that year. He has recently been appointed governor of Bégemder.

Among the *hommes de carrière* who received their rank as *ras* as a reward for service, mention must be made of Ras Nado and Ras Mulugeta, both men of the old school, who rose to eminence as officers under Menelik and, both in office at home and as representatives abroad, rendered their country devoted service. Ras Mulugeta died while on active service in 1936. It is an interesting and encouraging feature of Ethiopian public life that a fair field is open to men of talent and character, whatever their origin. The Galla has equal chance with the Amhara to rise to the top of the tree. This gave the emperor a wider choice, of which he has made good use. The present able Vice-Minister of Finance, Lij Yilma Deressa, who completed his education at the London School of Economics, and the Director of Education, Ato Emmanuel Abraham, are both Gallas from the province of Wallega.

## VIII

### REFORM

THUS supreme, acknowledged at his coronation as King of Kings by the homage of his leading *rases*, and as emperor by the presence of the representatives of the powers—in two cases royal personages

the Emperor Hailé Selassié I set himself, methodically, and without haste, to bring about those reforms for which he had so long been making his preparations. He had in mind as a good corrective to undue reforming zeal the fate of King Amanullah of Afghanistan. Progress must, he thought, be imposed, but not too forcibly, on the traditions of centuries. If, at times the emperor's policy seemed irritatingly cautious, it was because Hailé Selassié was too shrewd a man to be hustled into precipitate action.

It was necessary, first of all, to take adequate precautions to ensure that the authority of the emperor in initiating any schemes of reform should pass unchallenged, and it was for this reason, as well as for protection against external interference, that the emperor sought first of all the assistance of Europeans to train and equip his army and police. Young Ethiopians had already been sent in previous years to train at the French military college of Saint-Cyr. A Belgian military mission had been engaged as early as 1929 to train enough soldiers to provide the emperor with an efficient royal bodyguard. Later, Swedish officers were invited to train the expanding army of the central government and accustom them to the use of modern weapons and methods. The last step in this direction before the Italian war was the establishment of a school for officers. Selected from the pupils in the schools, and from the families of distinction, it was housed in the royal palace of rest at Holata, just outside the capital.

It was interesting to notice the amazing results in deportment and soldierly bearing achieved in a few months. Both Amharas and Gallas are good fighters, but little attention was paid in past centuries to their training in military discipline and drill. They served as irregular soldiers without uniforms or regimental organization and carried on the guerrilla warfare for which the terrain of the Ethiopian highlands is so admirably suited. Yet they responded immediately to the training imposed upon them, and the transformation of one young Galla officer

—the son of a local chief known for many years to the author—from an untutored peasant proprietor of somewhat insolent and slouching appearance, to a smart, courteous young lieutenant was the work of six months only. Even in the realm of aviation a beginning was made. Several planes of different makes had been acquired by the emperor on various occasions, and an enterprising and courageous French instructor, M. Paul Corriger, was appointed to take charge of a small school of aviation, started by his predecessor, M. Maillet, on behalf of the Ethiopian Government.

The police came under similar instruction. Prior to the arrival of the Belgian mission, the town *zabognia*, or watchman, had been an object of dislike, due often to his rough and ready methods and his arrogant demeanour, while his efficiency had never been estimated very high as a detector of crime or preserver of the peace. Much, however, was accomplished in a short time, and though the new police had practically no training in traffic control it was a matter of frequent comment that their behaviour and efficiency at the time of the coronation, when the city was crowded to its utmost capacity with people, animals and cars, was worthy of high commendation.

None of this was achieved without difficulty. The task of obtaining instructors was far from easy, and that of furnishing the newly trained army with arms and ammunition was well-nigh impossible. Indeed, the almost complete lack of modern arms and munitions was one of the factors which brought about the debacle in Ethiopia in 1936.

The question of the importation of arms into Africa is an old and exceedingly difficult problem. By the Tripartite Agreement of 1906 Great Britain, France, and Italy, the three powers holding contiguous territory, had pledged themselves to exercise a rigorous control on the importation of arms into Ethiopia. Of the three signatories Great Britain was the only one to exert more than a paper control. The French authorities turned a blind eye to the arms which arrived in considerable quantities in French Somaliland to find their way across the frontiers. Good money could be made on the smuggling of all forms of arms, and rumours were ripe that the railway company itself was not above packing wagon-loads of rifles, covered with but a thin disguise of *abujedid*, or cotton cloth. Nor was it likely that the Ethiopian customs officials would be loath to pass the goods.

With Ethiopia a sovereign member of the League of Nations the position was clearly different. The Brussels Act of 1890 prohibited

the import of arms into Africa, including a large tract of southern and central Ethiopia, 'for the preservation of African populations and the abolition of the slave trade.' The Convention for the Control of Arms Traffic in 1919 was introduced to amend the Brussels Act, which was clearly unfair to the Ethiopian Government, and Ethiopia pledged her Government to observe it as one of the conditions of her entry into the League. She also signed in 1925 the Convention for the Supervision of the International Trade in Arms. In actual fact these last two conventions never entered into force because they did not obtain the necessary number of ratifications.

It was necessary that the position should be clarified and that the emperor should be enabled to obtain sufficient arms to preserve internal order and defend his territories from external aggression. A new treaty was accordingly drawn up in July 1930, which gave the Ethiopian Government the power to order arms abroad, but laid down that no import should be permitted without a signed and sealed order from the emperor himself. He was thus recognized not only as the supreme head of the State, but as a responsible and trustworthy leader, who was to be supported and encouraged in his endeavour to maintain public order, and to resist aggression. It was, therefore, an infringement of this treaty, at least in spirit, when licences for the export of arms to Ethiopia were refused to firms in Britain by the British Government in the summer of 1935, although Italy was pouring troops into Eritrea and Somaliland. Though granted the right to import arms to resist aggression, when aggression was obviously in preparation the permission was made unavailing, and the embargo was lifted only when Italian troops had actually invaded Ethiopia.

Thus potentially equipped to maintain authority in the face of possible opposition, the emperor turned his attention to the first requirement of good government—an efficient civil service. It was here that serious difficulties confronted him. The products of the government school, and the first fruits of the Tafari Makonnen school were not in themselves sufficiently educated or experienced to be able to fulfil efficiently the duties of the offices to which they were appointed. The few promising young men who had been sent, at the emperor's private expense, to study foreign methods of government, were still, for the most part, in training when the war broke out.

There was no precedent, no tradition of a trained permanent civil service. Yet the emperor did not despair, and between 1931

and 1935 much was accomplished and the offices and directorates of the various departments of State underwent a thorough 'spring-cleaning.' One by one the ministries, War, Interior, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Commerce, Communications, Public Health, etc., were established, housed, and set to work, and foreign advisers were appointed.

There had been such advisers before, when Menelik had appointed a council of ministers to assist his failing powers. But this council had long since fallen into desuetude, and actually the civil administration was forced to start again *de novo*. Its members were often lacking in actual experience of the work to be done, and of the methods of doing it. Thus it happened that almost every decision of importance in every department of the State had to be referred to the emperor himself, and the resultant congestion of business, political, administrative, and commercial, made for constant friction and exasperation, both among the foreign legations and the heads of the business community.

The emperor had already, in the first few years of his reign, made a determined effort to remedy this trouble, and to complete the final stages in the education of his young men in civil administration, by setting at the head of many of the most important departments a competent foreign adviser.

Their work was twofold—to promulgate a policy, and to train a staff. Mr. Colson in the Ministry of Finance, M. Auberson, the Swiss legal adviser, Mr. Work in the Education Department, Mr. de Halpert at the Department of Internal Affairs, M. Colmodin and General Virgin at the Foreign Office—all of these while acting as consultants to the emperor had as an important part of their duties the task of tactfully instructing and leading the ministers to whose departments they were attached. It was work of immense importance and of almost insuperable difficulty.

In each department the adviser would find an older minister and a younger director. The combination represented a tactical move on the part of the emperor to conciliate the older generation with the appearance of power, and to encourage the younger by the semblance of authority. The scheme, though skilful in theory, was unworkable in practice, and made the position of the adviser decidedly difficult. The minister saw in the adviser a check to his own authority and independence; the younger director resented being instructed in work which he considered himself well able to manage. Thus the adviser had to steer his way between Scylla and Charybdis, referring every decision of importance to the emperor,

and unable himself to wield any executive power. In spite of these difficulties much useful work was accomplished, more especially in the departments of Finance and Law. Meanwhile there were slowly growing up the beginnings of a civil service—young men who were learning the rudiments of their profession.

So, gradually the new spirit of progress was finding its way by deviant channels throughout the length and breadth of this great country; and so, gradually will its people awake to a realization of all that is entailed in its activities. It was for this awakening that the emperor in 1931 prepared the new constitution which ‘marked the transformation of the empire of Ethiopia to a limited monarchy,’ even though the limitations of the emperor’s powers were slight.<sup>1</sup> In a speech with which he introduced this great innovation the emperor spoke of the moment having come for the Ethiopian people ‘to collaborate in the heavy task which, up to the present, their sovereigns have accomplished alone.’ In a private conversation on the same day the emperor said: ‘I know that my people cannot rule as yet; but I must educate them in political knowledge.’

The constitution provided for two chambers—an upper house or senate consisting of nobles and high officials of the emperor’s choice, and a popular chamber, the members of which were to be chosen by the nobles and local chiefs. This last was a temporary measure until the people should have reached that stage of political knowledge which would enable them to be trusted with the election of members by ballot. The emperor’s own decree is the best comment on the introduction of this important constitutional development.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix I.

<sup>2</sup> Since the above was written Colonel Sandford has stated at a meeting of the Anti-Slavery Society that one of the results of the Italian conquest, remarkable in Gojjam especially, is the growth of political consciousness among the people. In one district a local administration has been set up which is so successful that the emperor has been permitted to allow its continuance.

## IX

### PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

WHILE the emperor was thus busied in providing for himself a civil service which should, in the shortest possible time, be ready for the tasks awaiting it, much of the necessary work devolved on his own shoulders, or those of the very few of his subordinates who were already competent to do it. Meanwhile there remained the important problem of better provincial administration.

There were many reasons why reform in this department of State was urgent, and pressed for immediate consideration. Ethiopia—sometimes undeservedly, and on the theory that you give a dog a bad name, and hang it—had an unfortunate reputation as a bad neighbour. Her long frontiers were not only far removed from the authority of the central government, but also in their neighbourhood were found some of the most difficult tribes within her empire—the Danakil, the Aussa, the Eisa and Ogaden Somali, and the primitive tribes of the south-west. Those physical features of the country which had contributed to her own isolation and consequent freedom from external conquest, at the same time separated, and occasioned the semi-independence of, these outlying peoples, who in many cases paid no more than lip-service to the central government.

The prospect of residence in these remote, often unhealthy, desert places made no appeal to an Ethiopian governor, who had but poor communication with the capital, no medicines, little medical knowledge, and only a scanty supply of food and money, apart from that which he could raise in his province.

The scheme set up under Menelik was twofold. Certain of the larger provinces, notably Gojjam, Tigré, Jimma, and Wollo, had continued under the sway of semi-hereditary princes or *rases* whose tenure it was politic to admit for the moment, although their regime needed reform. Others had been farmed out on the lines of early Roman provincial government—this system being most often applied in the remoter districts in the south and south-west where an incentive was needed to make the appointment more palatable. The governor was sent down with his troops to install himself in the chief town or village of the province. He was

expected to remit annually to the central government tribute from the province both in money and in kind, more often the latter. His methods of exacting this tribute, though in the main prescribed from above, were under neither inspection nor criticism, unless he were foolish enough to mismanage his affairs so ill that complaints should reach the central government. This was not likely in view of the length of such a journey, of the time lost to the complainant in making it, and of the difficulty of finding a channel through which it might reach the ears of authority.

The governor was paid no salary, nor did his soldiers receive pay. In lieu of wages each man was allotted the overlordship of a certain number of tenants, i.e. *gabars*. These tenants were, so to speak, villeins of the central government which, by this system, transferred its rights as a landlord to the governor and his soldiers who represented it and were administering the country on its behalf. Both soldiers and officers of varying ranks received the number of *gabars* proportionate to their position, and exacted from them the services due from tenant to landlord. These were a form of rental in kind, and consisted of both services and produce; though these varied with local custom. One day's field labour every three, eight, or ten days, the provision of timber for building his overlord's residence and grass for thatching it, of firewood as required, and of one-fifth of the grain grown on the acres occupied—these were the main exactions sanctioned by the government from a *gabar* to his landlord-by-proxy. In addition to this there was a tax of one-tenth of the total crops grown which was paid direct to the government granaries.

Seen in the light of rent, rates, and income tax, these demands were not unfair, and if the *gabars* could have resisted the further claims levied on them without any sanction by the unscrupulous soldiers, the system was in theory a workable one, and had its safeguards in the right of appeal to the central government.

But, in fact, the abuse proved stronger than the system. The soldier demanded not only his due but a profit on it; and the delay involved in bringing such a case to the notice of the government official in charge was interminable. It would be impossible in practice for a man to appeal to the court in Addis Ababa, where such trials were held; the time taken on the journey, apart from the actual hearing of the appeal, would perhaps mean months away from home, and so entail loss of farming time, and consequently of food and future rent payments. Therefore the soldier was safe in exacting both his due and his profit; and the system was in practice

as extortionate as those of old Roman days. Officer and soldier were equally rapacious and the governor himself was guided more often by expediency than by justice. It was to his advantage to have his country quiet and uncomplaining. He would therefore practise and allow exploitation just up to, but not beyond, the danger-point: his reputation as a successful governor would depend on the maintenance of this fine balance.

This *gabar* system often, though wrongly, described as feudal - was responsible for much of the misery of the distant provinces where appeal was impossible and resistance useless.

In the more truly feudal provinces Shoa, Gojjam, Tigré, etc. - the *gabar* was more directly the tenant of his overlord, who often owned large tracts of his hereditary province. Though appeal against extortion was in practice impossible, the hereditary governor and his underlings were less likely to be so rapacious. Discontent could more easily be fanned into rebellion, by its sheer hopelessness. Further, the continuity of his office would induce in the ruling *ras* a greater interest in the welfare and loyalty of his own people, on whom he could then rely in case of need. He might exact from his serfs and villeins the penultimate ounce: but it must not be the last straw, or the camel's back would be broken, and he would find himself without that local army on whose support lay his chance of independent action.

Of all this the emperor was aware—most uneasily aware. He knew also that the extortion existing in these remote provinces was intimately and inextricably bound up with the question of slave trading. It was therefore essential that reform in provincial administration should take early place on his programme.

His methods again were cautious. Little by little as the governorships of the outlying provinces fell vacant, the emperor filled them with his own nominees—men with western training and ideas, who could be relied upon to give loyal support to his own schemes for progress, and to obey his orders. The first experiment was tried out in part of what was previously his own wide province of Harrar, of which a large part, the Chercher, was put under the governorship of Dr. Martin, who had himself been educated in India, and had taken an Edinburgh medical degree. Instructions were given that exorbitant taxation should be curtailed, and that everything possible should be done to stimulate commercial and agricultural prosperity. A new centre for the trade of the province, which is rich in coffee, was established by the founding of Asba Tafari. A road was built to link this new township with the

railway. Missionaries were invited to co-operate in providing schools and hospital clinics. The new governor received a salary and was allowed to take with him an educated and paid staff. The government tax in kind was accepted, if so desired, as a cash payment—an arrangement which, if it had been extended over the country, would have done much to lessen the evils of extortion through falsified measures and exorbitant demands.

The experiment was a success, albeit on a very small scale, and though educated and responsible Ethiopians were not numerous enough to offer a wide choice of governors, the appointments of the last three years prior to the Italian war showed that the emperor was bent on extending the principle to other provinces. Two or three of his choices are noteworthy—that of his son-in-law, Ras Desta Damtu for Sidamo (he was later executed after capture by the Italians on the pretext that he was a rebel); of Ras Imeru, a relative who had had the same education as his royal master, for the governorship of Gojjam, left vacant by the implication of its ruler, Ras Hailu, in a plot against the throne; and lastly of Fitaurari Zaudì to the governorship of Maji, the black spot of Ethiopia as regards the slave trade. For this reason this last appointment will be discussed in the next chapter, which deals with the whole question of slavery in Ethiopia.

Model provinces (*mardbet*), such as Chercher, Sidamo, Wallega, Bali, and Gojjam, were thus set up; but for a permanent improvement in the lot of the provincial, whether governor or governed, one other thing was clearly necessary—an improvement in communications. It was the distance from the capital, and that distance magnified tenfold by the poor ness of the tracks and so-called roads by which contact could with difficulty be made or kept, that had so greatly enhanced the difficulties of the central government in maintaining control over provincial governors.

This was a position that could be remedied, and the emperor had already planned the construction of better roads to the chief centres of government. Wisely enough he set about the construction of these in the form of earth roads, that would not demand an outlay out of all proportion to their trade return; and, except for the road from Addis Ababa to Addis Alem, and a few miles of road in the capital itself, none was metalled.<sup>1</sup>

Four chief routes marked the initial stages of better communications in the empire before the Italian aggression, and all were further developed and improved during the Italian occupation.

<sup>1</sup> The Italian roads are computed to have cost over £10,000 per mile.

The wisdom of the Ethiopian in barring the approach to his highlands by the lack of good roads had perhaps never before been so clearly demonstrated as in the year 1941, when the high roads which the Italians built from south to north-east to the capital proved the undoing of the usurpers and brought the invading armies of the avenger in at a pace previously undreamed of.

The road along which the Italians were driven back from the south-east was a continuation of a road already in use before the Italian war. It ran from Dire Dawa to Harrar by way of the beautiful Lake Haramaya, and thence on to Jigjiga whence a track possible for lorries connected it to the frontier of British Somaliland.

This road was constructed as far back as 1928 and was practicable for both cars and lorries between Dire Dawa and Harrar, though the track onwards to Jigjiga, Hargeisa, and Daghabur was only open to lorries. But other tracks across the desert were available, connecting Jigjiga with Aisha on the railway, and Gildessa, the centre of converging caravan routes from south and north.

Thus, together with short roads running from the railway into Chercher country, the whole province of Harrar was very well served.

To the north-east, communications were much more limited. The road from Addis Ababa to Dessie in Wollo was actually in use, but the going was bad in any but the driest weather, gradients were steep, and in many parts heavy transport encountered considerable difficulty. From Dessie to the port of Assab a road had been surveyed in accordance with the Italo-Abyssinian Treaty of 1928, but disagreement as to the route and the engineers to be employed had held up its actual construction.

More directly to the north little had been done to link up the provinces surrounding Lake Tsana with the capital. It was just possible to reach the top of the Blue Nile gorge in a car, but the road was very rough. Thus Gojjam and the northern provinces were virtually independent of control from the capital by their very inaccessibility, and it was to the interest of their semi-hereditary *rases* to maintain this aloofness. For this reason they passively discouraged opening up communications in this direction. This did not necessarily mean that they were disloyal, although they were, of course, easy soil for Italian propaganda.

Westwards the road to Goré through Lekempti was making good progress under government engineers, while Goré itself was

linked to Gambeila, its trading outlet with the Sudan, by a fine piece of engineering work from Burei over difficult and unhealthy country.

The road running south-west from Addis Ababa to Jimma was designed to continue westwards to link up that town with Goré, and so open up another rich tract of country with outlets towards the Sudan. Good work had been done on this road with the help of American grading machines, and the result was one of the most serviceable routes in the country. A rough track--but passable in the dry weather for lorries--was also in use through the Sidamo and Borana country, and though the journey was far from comfortable, contact had actually been established between Nairobi and Addis Ababa.

Though this opening up of road communications through the empire was in its early stages, and indeed required budgeting for on a much larger scale before anything approaching first-class roads could be undertaken, yet the intentions of the emperor were clearly evident. In comparison with the condition of the capital, as first known to the author in 1920, with its complete lack of roads suitable for motor-cars in the town or the surrounding district, substantial progress had been made. In those days every journey, whether to shop in the town, to play tennis at the club, to dine at the foreign legations, or to attend a soirée at the palace, had to be made on pony or mule. There was one car, joined, by 1925, by one or two others, which might be met on the dusty, rocky tracks through the centre and outskirts of the town perhaps once or twice a year, to the discomfiture of riders and caravans whose animals greatly resented these usurpers of their right of way. By 1930 some hundreds of cars were, by contrast, licensed to run in the widened and surfaced streets of the town; and they made occasional trips within a fifty miles' radius of the capital. This represents a considerable effort on the part of the emperor and his subjects; for most of this work was achieved without road-making machines of any kind and by local labour. During the years of his regency it was no uncommon sight for Ras Tafari to be seen walking along some newly laid-out road of his capital carrying on his own shoulder a stone, as would be his officers and attendant chiefs, accompanied by a surging crowd of the townsfolk all sharing in the day's game of follow my leader--and so another stretch of the new city road would be achieved, to be finished off with the steam-roller and a few paid labourers.

Hailé Selassié planned and contrived; the Italian aggressors

provided the money, the skill, and the machines, and enforced the labour. The roads will remain, though their upkeep and repair will constitute a very serious charge on an administration which from its own resources cannot possibly meet the cost, and which has neither the skill nor technical knowledge needed for the task.

## X

### SLAVERY

AFTER the emperor had re-established his government in 1941 one of his first concerns was to investigate the possibility of the complete abolition of slavery, which still persisted in spite of the Italian decrees. Consequently he issued the law of August 1942, which abolished the legal status of slavery throughout the empire and prescribed heavy penalties for kidnapping and for trading in slaves. The law courts have since been rigorously enforcing this law, and the people themselves are in most parts of the country fully alive to the evils of slavery and anxious to have it completely suppressed. How great a change this is, amounting indeed to a social revolution, can only be realized when the history of slavery in Ethiopia is known. In this chapter is given some account of the customs of slavery and serfdom as they existed for centuries, and of the emperor's efforts to bring them to an end.

In any consideration of slavery in Ethiopia it is necessary to understand clearly the threefold aspect of the subject. There was, first, the comparatively mild form of domestic slavery on which much of the social system was based. Then there was the form of serfdom which, in the outlying provinces of the empire during the last hundred years, greatly increased as a result of Amhara conquests and their system of provincial administration; and thirdly, there were the crimes of slave raiding and trading which, though diminishing in volume and driven underground by repeated enactments, still existed at the time of the Italian invasion in certain black spots, though resolute action was in one district successful in defeating them.

Domestic slaves, whether prisoners taken in war, or the children of such prisoners born in slavery, or whether acquired by purchase, were regarded, and regarded themselves, as an integral part of the household to which they belonged. The few great *rasss* used to keep numbers of slaves to cook and serve the feasts with which they used to entertain their soldiery. The smaller chiefs who cultivated their own land, and the more substantial peasant cultivators, usually owned a few slaves whose duty it was to work in the fields, to tend the herds, and in the case of women to carry fuel and water and

attend to the domestic work in the house and the care of the children. In practice the life of such slaves differed but little from that of the free agricultural labourer, except that they could not leave their owner and did not reap for themselves any measured result of their labours in money or kind. The slave often had his own hut and perhaps a small garden which he cultivated for his own use. In many cases slaves were allowed to retain their own emoluments and even own cattle. They could marry, and in one case of my own experience an Amhara Christian made himself responsible for the baptism of a small pagan boy, and saw to his instruction by the priests of the local church. The domestic slaves were in general treated kindly, and frequently rose to positions of great trust.

The serfs or *gabars* who worked the land for their soldier-owners were less well cared for, and might indeed be starved and over-worked to supply their masters. In the districts round Addis Ababa there was little evidence of this; but in the outlying districts there was little to check extortion and oppression. It is interesting to remember that the present emperor has abolished the *gabar* system, as well as having given their freedom to the palace slaves many years ago.

Finally, the third problem, the slave trade, with all that it implies, is the one which has received most publicity and to which the emperor and his Government have devoted particular attention. The emperor, as will be pointed out in the pages that follow, was always most anxious to effect the complete abolition of trading in slaves with the least possible delay. This desire had already met with a large measure of success when he came to the throne, and thereafter both the law and its administration were tightened up. Steady progress was made, even if, in the eyes of the outside world, it seemed slow.

In the preface to his book, *The Abyssinian at Home*, the late Mr. C. H. Walker, H.B.M. consul at Goré in western Ethiopia for more than twenty years, writes: 'No useful purpose could have been served by a chapter on Slavery, since the Government is doing its utmost to stamp out this institution.' This was published in 1933 and indicated the opinion of a very well-informed critic, of the efforts made by the emperor and his Government during the first years of his reign.

It was many years ago that the first steps were taken to suppress the traffic in slaves as an initial measure towards the abolition of slavery as a whole. In a letter written in 1878, and sent to the

principal sovereigns and rulers in Europe, Menelik, then newly appointed King of Shoa by the Emperor John, affirmed his intention to stop slave-trading within his own borders; and he asked for the co-operation of the governments concerned in maintaining strict watch upon the Somali and Eritrean coasts and along the Red Sea. That fulfilment often fell short of his intention was evidenced by the fact that slave caravans were reported to be passing through to Tajura in 1886, and that Galla slaves were on sale in Hodeidah and Mecca in 1901.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile in 1884 the first of a series of treaties between Great Britain and Ethiopia was concerned entirely with the slave trade. This treaty was faithfully carried out by King John and 'there is no known case of slaves passing through his dominions from the time it was signed until his death.'<sup>2</sup>

There has never been any concealment of the facts of domestic slavery in Ethiopia. The system is as old as Ethiopian history, and was of the same type as might be found in many eastern countries prior to and during the early part of the nineteenth century. It was tempered by the fact that the Amhara people, who were the great majority of slave owners, have always been a Christian people, are not a cruel race, esteem women far more highly than do Mohammedans, and are naturally attracted by and kind to children. While this in no way condones or mitigates the horrors of slave raiding and trading, it does improve the lot of the slave in Ethiopia. No true picture of slavery in Ethiopia could be given without drawing attention to the position of the domestic slave (*barya*) as an integral part of the family, and to that of the predial slave (*gabar*) or serf as the lowest rung in the feudal ladder—an integral part of the State.

Slaves in Ethiopia, as in most parts of the ancient world, were usually the result of conquest. From the tribal raid to the imperial military campaign the captives of sword and spear became the property of the victor. The latter could use the women and children to serve in his household, the men and boys to till for his benefit the lands which, formerly their own, now became the property of the conquerors. From the fact that the Amhara people finally emerged from centuries of warfare as the dominant race, they became the slave owners, and the conquered Gallas, guragies, and the Nilotic tribes of the west and south-west became the slaves.

It is, however, equally true that the local tribes of the outlying

<sup>1</sup> A. B. Wylde, *Modern Abyssinia*, pp. 472 and 475.  
<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 475.

districts raided each other and enslaved their captives; and, from such surplus as they might not need for their own purposes, bartered their prisoners to extraneous slave dealers in exchange for rifles and ammunition, with which they might as necessity arose protect themselves against similar attacks. The traffic in arms is intimately bound up with the trade in slaves, and for this traffic Europeans were responsible. As a third contribution to the numbers of the enslaved came the *serf* the *gabar* who, as in old days in England, had fallen into debt to his master and could not pay the annual dues and services expected of him, whether through sickness, bad harvests, or other causes, and who therefore sold himself and members of his family to become the property of the landlord. So long as the landlord, in the person of the Amhara governor or his soldiers, remained in the district there was not much difference in actual fact between the *serf* and the predial slave which he became. He must still be allowed to grow enough corn to support himself and his family as well as to supply his overlord. It is doubtful whether as *gabar* he did much more; for where there is danger of the surplus being seized, there is no incentive to grow it.

Here then are the sources—threefold in number—of the slave population in Ethiopia prior to the Italian invasion. In the face of these facts can it be maintained that the emperor during his years of regency had taken steps to carry out his country's obligations as a member of the League of Nations which she entered on that condition in 1923?

It was an immense problem. The slave owners saw no illegality—nor was there any, nor even impropriety—in their position. As late as 1924, 1925, and 1926 British district commissioners on the Sudan frontier were being asked quite openly for the return of runaway slaves who had crossed the border at Gallabat, Fung, and Roseires. The *gabar* system was only a part of the feudal system in force, and its enslaving results may not have been foreseen. It would be a great mistake to consider that any large proportion of *gabars* necessarily became slaves.

To effect reform it was necessary to effect a change of mind towards slavery as an institution, and this Hailé Selassié set himself steadily to bring about. His method was by precept and example rather than by spectacular and sweeping decrees which, if they could have been enforced, might well have thrown into confusion the social structure of his empire, and produced economic chaos. In the capital itself several thousand slaves freed from control and

destitute of support would have presented a serious and menacing problem.

Even prior to the entry of Ethiopia into the League, Hailé Selassie had reaffirmed the edicts published by Menelik against the slave trade: 'Any person is liable to the death penalty who, without the king's authorization and except in case of war, seizes any person by violence with the object of enslaving him.' The publication of the edict was backed by immediate action, and in 1922 several dealers caught red-handed paid for their crimes with their lives. The author well remembers how, in those days of public execution, the grim evidence of the penalty exacted for contravention of the slave laws hung at each gateway of the town.

In 1925, however, it was stated before the League of Nations that cases of slave trading were more numerous in Ethiopia than in all the rest of Africa, and this led the regent to draw attention to the fact that good prices still existed for slaves in Arabia, and that embarkation must take place from Egypt, the Sudan, Eritrea, or the Somalilands. Suggestions were made that concerted action should be taken to give effect to the desire expressed by the Ethiopian Government 'to come to an agreement with the States which administer the neighbouring countries for taking effective combined action.' Thus Ethiopia showed herself concerned for her reputation, though she refused to shoulder the whole responsibility for the continuance of the export of slaves from or through Ethiopia overseas.

At the same meeting of the League commission the Ethiopian Government had publicly expressed 'the intention of obtaining the gradual disappearance of slavery as a recognized institution'; and this bore out the spirit of the law issued by the empress on the recommendation of the regent during the previous year (1924).<sup>1</sup> This law provided for the liberation of any slave who could prove cruelty or underfeeding against his master, of all those slaves who had been sponsored at their baptism by their owner, of all whom, with their owner's permission, had entered the Army or the Church, of any slave whose master had not claimed him within a week of his arrest. It was further enacted that slaves who were not liberated on the death of their master (as was not infrequently done) should serve for seven years only in the household of the heir, after which they should be considered free. In the case of divorce the slave was free to follow either husband or wife, as he preferred.

<sup>1</sup> Extracts from the Anti-Slavery Laws of 1924 and 1931 will be found in Appendix II.

A school for liberated slaves of tender age was also a provision of this law; but, though visited and approved by the Phelps Stokes Educational Mission of 1924, it passed several years in obscurity before its reform and reinstatement as a definite part of policy in 1931.

These were foundations on which the reforms envisaged by the League members might rest; provided they were put into practice. But it was as difficult for the regent to make any immediate change in this direction as it was with most of the other plans which he was so busy devising and preparing during the waiting years. The lack of communications, the conservatism of many of the officials of the old school, the traditions of feudalism and the old type of provincial government all militated against rapid change; and the regent was loath to stir up trouble until his own position and authority were more secure. He did, however, institute slavery courts, where cases between owner and slave could be heard, and these functioned not only in Addis Ababa, but also in those places which were known to be old centres of the slave traffic—Goré, Jimma, Kaffa, Gondar, and Dangila.

In this connection it is interesting to notice the opinions expressed by British consuls in three out of the five districts concerned. The first is the quotation from Mr. Walker's book, the second is taken from a chapter in *Lake Tana and the Blue Nile*, by Major R. Cheesman, H.B.M. consul at Dangila: 'Guner was once a centre of the slave trade, being the first depot on the right bank of the Abbai for slave caravans coming from the south and going north. This had all been changed by the measures taken by the Ethiopian Government to abolish slavery.' The third comes from information laid before the League in 1925, 'that the great public slave markets which formerly existed have now disappeared, even Jimma, which appears to be the chief slaving and slavery centre.'

Complaints, however, of frontier raids into Kenya and Sudan territory continued to be brought before the League commission during the years 1925–9, sometimes substantiated by evidence, though often vague and lacking precision. It is likely that at first the disappearance of the open slave market had merely driven the trade underground. Further, it was recognized that in many cases raiding represented an intermediate stage between inter-tribal conquest and subjection, and trading pure and simple. Meanwhile the regent had not even yet a free hand, and it was hoped that better things might eventuate when he became emperor. Nor were these hopes disappointed.

The letter from the Ethiopian representative to the League in September 1930 declared that 'suppression of the traffic in slaves is proceeding with thoroughness. The emperor since his accession has notified his firm resolve to pursue this work rigorously.' The same month a list of 991 liberations for the year 1929-30 was submitted to the commission and 399 condemnations in the Slavery Court.

This 'firm resolve' was borne out by the emperor's invitation to the Anti-Slavery and Aborigines Protection Society to send representatives to discuss the situation, and advise him on it. In 1932 a commission was sent out under the chairmanship of Lord Noel Buxton. Discussion took place freely, and if the commission left with a feeling of disappointment that actual accomplishment was slight, the result of their visit was primarily the promise given by the emperor that he would abolish slavery from his dominions within twenty years.

A new slavery bureau was forthwith set up in Addis Ababa with an Englishman, Mr. de Halpert, to act as adviser, the number of provincial bureaux was increased to sixty-two, and the school for liberated child slaves was revived and enlarged. The following year, 1933-4, saw the liberation of 3,647 slaves, according to the report sent to the League.

It was clear that the pace of reform was being greatly accelerated, and once again the emperor urged foreign co-operation in dealing with the traffic to Arabia, which was necessarily carried on through the European possessions on the coast. 'Strike at this,' he said. 'The supply will cease when the demand ceases; so long as good prices are paid in the overseas market, control of supply is more difficult.'

Meanwhile the difficulties in provincial administration referred to in a foregoing chapter still kept conditions in outlying districts far from satisfactory; and in 1933 a strongly critical report was sent in by H.B.M. consul in Maji on the oppression of the *gabars* by Amhara soldiery, and the depopulation of large tracts of country through raids, fear, and unrest. These criticisms were further endorsed by Mr. de Halpert, who had resigned his post as adviser to the Slavery Department, and who had, with the emperor's consent, followed up his term of office by a trip through one of the worst districts of the Maji province. He was equally loud in his denunciation of the conditions prevailing.

Even then the emperor did not allow himself to be hustled into any hasty and superficial remedy. Going to the root of the matter

he added the province of Maji to his list of model provinces, subject to direct administration. He recalled the existing governor, bade him withdraw all his soldiery to meet the Italian menace from the north, sent down as governor a young man of good family whom he knew and trusted, and gave him the most active assistance possible in the person of Lij Alemayou Tenna, who had been director of the Slave Bureau, when Mr. de Halpert was adviser. Finally he appointed an Englishman with long experience of, and residence in, the country, as adviser to the new governor, with special duties towards the suppression of the slave traffic.

The plan succeeded beyond all expectation. Six months only was accorded to the new experiment before the storm of war rolled westwards and ended their efforts. But in those six months an incredible improvement had been wrought in the aspect and morale of the local inhabitants.

To quote from a private memorandum:

'Early in 1935 the province of Maji was reorganized by the emperor as one of the model provinces, and by May 1936 (war with Italy having broken out in October 1935) the situation was under control and the traffic in slaves had practically ceased. I can give chapter and verse for this statement, and I think that this fine piece of work by the emperor's Government should be more widely known.'<sup>1</sup>

Since his return to Ethiopia the emperor has put the crown on his work of suppressing slavery in his empire. The series of laws designed to restrain and reduce slavery was brought to a conclusion by the law of 27th August 1942, already referred to, which provided for the abolition of the legal status of slavery in Ethiopia and prescribed heavy penalties for kidnapping, for engaging directly or indirectly in slave dealing, and for obstructing a slave from asserting his freedom with others.

In a number of cases the sentence of death was imposed and carried out, and other heavy penalties have been imposed even on chiefs having a high social position. Public opinion in Ethiopia has been deeply impressed by this meting out of justice without consideration of rank or station, and it is generally realized that the Government is determined to put an end to slavery and forced labour. This policy has the support of the great majority of the population.

Later the High Court, presided over by a British judge, went on circuit through those provinces having the worst reputation for

<sup>1</sup> Colonel D. A. Sandford, *Slavery in Abyssinia, 1938*.

practices connected with slavery; that is, in south and south-west Ethiopia. Since August 1942 the High Court has tried more than two hundred cases of alleged contravention of the anti-slavery laws, whilst provincial courts, presided over by governors, have dealt with others.

## XI

### SOCIAL REFORMS

DURING the years 1920-35 there was much evidence in and around the capital that the regent was fully alive to the need for better living conditions of his people, if they were to take their place among the progressive peoples of Africa. While in the European colonies the fight against dirt and its companion, disease, had already been waged with increasing success during the early years of the twentieth century, the position in Ethiopia had had no chance of improvement. The prevalence of smallpox, venereal disease, typhus, trachoma, and leprosy was increased by the rapid growth of the population in Addis Ababa, and in 1918 the town suffered very severely from the world-wide influenza epidemic. The town had no system of sanitation for a population normally somewhat over a hundred thousand; there was no adequate water supply; hospital accommodation and medical facilities were quite inadequate: the idea of quarantine was unknown. It was indeed only the wonderful climate of the highlands, with its dry air, brilliant sunshine, yet temperate heat, for nine months of the year, followed by the cleansing torrents of the rainy season, that checked the spread of infection and made epidemics very uncommon. The author brought up a family of six children in Addis Ababa and its vicinity without any infectious illness among them in over fifteen years, with the exception of one case of whooping cough, and occasional conjunctivitis infection which, after a little experience, was avoided altogether.

If living conditions could therefore be improved, medical facilities provided and the population given some instruction in hygiene, there was no reason why the Ethiopians of the plateau country should not rank highest in physical well-being among the peoples of Africa. It was with this end in view that the regent encouraged with his interest and assistance every form of medical help offered by foreigners, whether propagandist (e.g. Italian), private, or missionary: while at the same time he welcomed and encouraged all educational endeavour.

The Swedes, among foreigners, were the earliest in the field of medical and educational assistance. Entering the country as far back as 1866, a Swedish mission succeeded, against almost overwhelming odds, in establishing themselves in Eritrea and in the

north in 1870; a second attempt was made and work was opened in 1903 in Harrar to the south. Both stations were maintained until the Italian occupation in 1936, as a result of which they were expelled from work which had taken them over fifty years to build up, and which had been carried on with unflinching devotion. When Ras Tafari was appointed regent in 1916 'it was the dawn of a new era for Abyssinia and for Swedish mission work. Then, and later as emperor, Hailé Selassié showed the greatest goodwill toward the mission and has always given it his support.'<sup>1</sup> On the occasion of his visit to Sweden the regent said: 'The chief reason for my visit is my love for Sweden. Swedish missionaries have performed in my country a great and blessed work. They have founded schools and hospitals, they speak our language, and they, of all missionaries, have best known how to win the affection and trust of my people.'

It was gratitude for their work and admiration of their methods that made the emperor desirous of securing Swedish doctors and nurses for the hospital founded and maintained by his private purse since 1926. This, the Bethsaida Hospital, did magnificent work, although its buildings and equipment were on a small scale, and not least among its activities was the training of Abyssinian women as competent and intelligent nurses.

The first hospital to be opened in Addis Ababa was, however, the work of the Russian Red Cross, under whose auspices the Menelik Hospital was opened towards the end of the nineteenth century. The mission had been sent out during the Adowa campaign to aid the Abyssinians, 'because they were, or nearly so, their co-religionists; pills and bandages marking the first steps of Russia in Africa.'<sup>2</sup> This hospital continued its work without intermission under the supervision of French doctors. Though neither buildings nor equipment were as good as those of the Bethsaida Hospital, improvements had been made at the Ethiopian Government's expense, and this institution was known as the Government Hospital.

Mention must also be made of another medical enterprise, this time on the part of the American Presbyterian Mission, who, starting as pioneers in western Ethiopia, where Dr. T. A. Lambie opened a hospital at Buré (Ila Babor) and later in Góré, reached Addis Ababa in 1922. Within two years Dr. Lambie had built, equipped, and staffed a hospital with a hundred and sixty beds in the western

<sup>1</sup> General Virgin, *The Abyssinia I Knew*, p. 113.  
<sup>2</sup> A. B. Wyld, *Modern Abyssinia*, p. 417.

suburbs of the capital. Here again the Regent lent his ready support. Presenting them with the site for their hospital, he never failed to interest himself in the work of the mission, visiting the hospital and the schools attached to it. As similar work was extended to other centres under the auspices of the Sudan Interior Mission, he was most ready to take advantage of the assistance offered and gave every facility towards their establishment. In the model provinces he definitely sought their help and that of other missions to establish schools and hospitals in the provincial centres of Chercher and Sidamo.

Prevention, however, is better than cure, and the fact that typhus, smallpox, and venereal disease were rampant in the capital, called for preventive measures. The Ethiopians themselves were alive to the situation. 'I do not believe there is any nation,' says A. B. Wylde, 'that are more willing to put themselves under the doctor's care than these Abyssinians, but they want the medicine and the attendance for nothing.'<sup>1</sup> For this reason the medical services offered freely by Italian doctors before the invasion were greatly appreciated. Besides the staff of a Pasteur and vaccine institute in Addis Ababa, there were many other Italian doctors in the provincial towns who had a large clinical attendance. 'The Abyssinian is not nearly such a fool about vaccination as some of the English fanatics'<sup>2</sup>—and perhaps because vaccination from the actual patient was the custom in old days among the Abyssinians themselves, they took very kindly to the European vaccine and turned up in their hundreds to benefit by the new treatment. Equally anxious were they to take advantage of the injections at the American hospital and the various other foreign clinics in the town.

Two other advances in the field of public health must be noted. During the regency the Seventh Day Adventist Mission had acquired permission to build a maternity hospital near the hot springs, Fil Wuha, to the south of the town, and it was well patronized and ably managed. This was a special interest of the late empress and, when finally opened in 1934, was named the Zauditu Memorial Hospital.

On one of the south-western approaches to the city was built the leprosarium, which was the final medical assistance given by the Sudan Interior Mission to Ethiopia before its expulsion by the Italian authorities. Under a Canadian surgeon, assisted by twelve nurses, this institution had already admitted some eighty inmates,

<sup>1</sup> Op. cit., p. 234.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

while others were obtaining treatment, either at the clinic or in their own homes. This fine piece of work was warmly welcomed by the emperor and his Government, and since its opening in 1934 it had already dealt with over two hundred cases.

Such services rendered by the missions in the capital itself were an assistance and example to the emperor and his Government, and plans were already afoot for a municipal clinic, the principal existing clinic being that of the city police. In the provinces the work of the medical missions was as gladly welcomed throughout the country, and over twenty hospitals and clinics were established in the provinces of Harrar, Sidamo, Wollamo, Goré, Gojjam, Wollo, and the Arussi. Difficulties existed only to be overcome by the patience and tenacity of the missionary, and by the steady support of the emperor, which was always to be relied upon when the provincial authorities were difficult. The very magnitude of the task (for the Ethiopian has little skill and no knowledge of medicine) convinced the emperor of the need for education in the field of hygiene, and a class for medical studies had been attached to the government school for the training of clinical assistants, while tentative plans for a medical school, outlined by the late Dr. Melly, had already engaged his interest and attention.

It was the experience of the author that simple education in the most elementary rules of hygiene and cleanliness would have done much to mitigate the unnecessary suffering, especially among the women and children of the peasantry. For over ten years the distribution of medicines, disinfectants, and dressings worked many apparent miracles in the countryside within a twenty-mile radius. Confidence, patient submission to treatment, and a humble gratitude are among the characteristics of the Galla peasant and Amhara soldier, who would attend with equal regularity at the small wattle-and-daub dispensary, that occasionally housed a typhus patient, a malaria victim, or a casualty that was too far for daily treatment in his own home. Memories were long when help had been given, and steadily the right soil in which to plant the first seeds of education in hygiene and elementary first aid was being prepared in many districts.

It was the year 1935 that saw also the birth of the Ethiopian branch of the Red Cross, and a women's committee was formed from members of the Ethiopian Women's Patriotic Association. Alongside of this was formed the Ethiopian Women's Work Association under the patronage of the empress and the presidency of her daughter, the Princess Tsahai Worq.

If evidence were needed of the ability of Ethiopian women to play their full part in the life of their nation, it would be found in the records of the Ethiopian Women's Work Association, which was formed in August 1935, in anticipation of the Italian invasion, to provide medical supplies and comforts to Ethiopian troops.

Although this was the first women's organization of any kind ever known in Ethiopia, the members of the association equipped entirely the first ambulance unit sent to the north and provided all the bandages and dressings for the southern unit.

Working hard, the members of the association, which comprised ladies of the court and middle-class women alike, themselves cut out, sewed, washed, and packed the supplies required. With the advice of a delegate from the 'Save the Children' Fund, the organization extended its activities to the field of social welfare. A clinic was opened in Addis Ababa and functioned until the Italians came in.<sup>1</sup> Dependents of men killed in action were assisted with money and shelter.

It has become obvious that given scope and opportunity the women of Ethiopia will be found fully capable of taking their share in the work of national reconstruction.

If medical work was important, so also was the sister interest of the missions—education; and here again the emperor had as regent shown himself diligent in creating a new atmosphere in which the youth of his country might grow up into useful citizenship. I have already quoted the answer given to the Phelps Stokes Educational Commission by the great majority of young lads questioned as to the aim of their school life. It was quite remarkable to the resident of many years' standing that whereas in 1920 the boy on his household staff who could read and write was a notable exception, in 1935 among the same society there were few young men and boys who had not mastered the elementary processes of reading and writing the Amharic script; and that was no mean feat.

The Amharic alphabet, including some characters confined to the ancient Geez language, consists of thirty-three consonants, each of which has seven forms, and seven vowels. It necessitates the use of some two hundred and fifty-one symbols, which are reproduced on a piece of stiff cardboard or paper pasted on to a wooden frame, called a *fidail*. Each scholar carries one of these about with him until he is master of its intricacies. Add to the symbols above another twenty different characters for figures, and it will

<sup>1</sup> It was reopened in 1944 as a welfare centre, and the association also supports an orphanage for the children of patriots killed in fighting the Italians.

be realized that to learn to read and write Amharic is a long and delicate process.

What then were the opportunities for education during this period, 1920-35, when so much change could be observed in the general attitude? They were threefold: Church, Mission, and State. The arrangement is chronological. During preceding centuries education, of a very primitive type and confined almost exclusively to the priestly caste, had been given by the churches. Outside each round thatched church throughout the Christian Amharic-speaking provinces, there would gather round the priest or scribe a sprinkling of the sons of local clergy, to learn by rote the psalms of David in the ancient Ethiopic language (Geez) in which services were and still are read. After the psalms would come the study of the gospels—but all still in a language that the boys themselves did not understand, and might indeed never learn. Even the priests who read the service in Geez might have only a very slight idea of what they were reading.

The actual mechanics of reading and writing thus acquired in the church precincts, the clever boy would then make use of them to enable him to read the more secular Amharic; but it is obvious that education of this kind is a very restricted affair, and that it was only the boy of marked intelligence or perseverance who could translate his knowledge into everyday usefulness. When, therefore, the missions started work in Ethiopia, education was one of the first tasks to which they brought assistance. The schools started by the Swedish Mission in Harrar and Addis Ababa have been the early training ground of many of Ethiopia's best public men; for instance Blattengueta Herouy, the late Minister for Foreign Affairs, received his early training here.

Undoubtedly these and similar mission schools have been the means of supplying the emperor with some of the junior grades of the civil service which he so badly needed and still needs. He recognized the value of the missions, and by his interest in their welfare gave them a very special standing in the country. Together with the Presbyterian (American) and Seventh Day Adventist Missions, their stations formed a good network over central and southern Ethiopia, and they, with the several Roman Catholic missions who are influential in the Addis Ababa and Harrar districts, must be accounted to have been the main educational force in the country since the beginning of the century.)

When, however, in 1908 Menelik opened the school which bears his name, and this was enlarged, and then in 1929 duplicated by

the formation of the Tafari Makonnen School, there became available a steady stream of young Ethiopians who had received a good primary education and had also studied a foreign language—English, French, or Italian. Of these the most intelligent were then selected for further education abroad, and in 1935 some forty young men were actually undergoing training in various foreign countries and for many different vocations. For legal and military training, France and Italy were selected; for agriculture and technical instruction, England. Other youths were sent to America, Sweden, Egypt, and Syria (Beirut College). All this was provided for by the regent from his private purse, as was also the maintenance of the Tafari Makonnen School. (It might indeed be said that in Ethiopia the emperor ushered in the dawn of a new era in education.) Nor was the women's side entirely neglected, the Empress Menen having founded a girls' school in 1931 which provided for eighty girls under a French headmistress.

All this activity in the educational field was the personal care of the emperor, who was intensely interested in the new Ethiopia that he was so eagerly hoping to see placed among the civilized nations of the world: but there was much leeway to make up. In the realm of educational material he had not been inactive. A government press, founded in 1910, was supplemented by the Imperial Printing Press of 1930; and from these were issued the Amharic text-books for use in the schools. Further, it was from this press that there was issued the translation of the Bible, previously available only in Geez, into Amharic, which was an especial interest of the emperor, under whose auspices it was made available to all the churches. This was an important step in the nationalization and revitalization of the Ethiopian Church, and it will be considered in the chapter devoted to the Church. But the subject cannot be left without mention of the cordial support given by the emperor to the work of the British and Foreign Bible Society in Ethiopia—a work which, under the zealous leadership of Mr. and Mrs. Bevan, had made substantial progress since its inception in 1920. Priestly opposition has been passive rather than active; and there were notable exceptions amongst the clergy, some having taken an active part in the spread of the Amharic Bible.

There was plenty of good material ready to hand in this slowly awakening country, and the experience gained at that time was a happy augury for the future. During those years there was indeed a notable change of attitude on the part of the people. The emperor may well have hoped that the five years of Italian

occupation would still further have increased the number of boys who have benefited by a primary education, but this unfortunately was not the case.

To strike the iron while it is hot is his essential duty; a training college for teachers must be among the first of his tasks, and it is probable in view of the past that there is no task to which the restored emperor will bend more sympathetically the untiring perseverance which he has already shown in educational matters.

## XII

### BANKING AND CURRENCY

THE creation in 1931 of a Bank of Ethiopia was a further important step in the economic development of the country. It took over the activities of the Bank of Abyssinia, which had been founded in 1906 as an offshoot of the National Bank of Egypt, and had been governed and managed by Englishmen. From 1931 banking in Ethiopia became the exclusive right of the Imperial Government, which retained for the new State bank the staff of the old bank, and secured also the services of an American financial adviser, Mr. Everard Colson, who had a seat on the board of the new bank.

The Bank of Ethiopia issued notes of the value of \$500, \$100, \$50, \$10, \$5, \$2, and these notes were current in Addis Ababa and the other towns. In the country districts, however, paper money was suspect, and the far less commodious silver Maria Theresa dollars were the only generally recognized currency. They were stamped with the head of the Austrian empress of the eighteenth century, though the coinage, which circulated in Iraq and Arabia, was not in use in Ethiopia until 1850. But by the beginning of the twentieth century so deeply rooted was the detail of the design in the minds of the Ethiopian country folk that they would examine and reject any coin that differed in the smallest particular—even the number of pearls on the empress's veil on the Maria Theresa dollar, or the size and twist of the lion's tail on the reverse of the smaller coins. When Menelik issued dollars impressed with his own effigy, they refused to take them into general use; both a consignment of \$20,000 from Trieste, and a reissue some seven days later, failed to commend themselves to popular favour, and though these are sometimes to be met with in the towns, it is still the old dollar with the head of an Austrian queen of two hundred years ago which is the only widely recognized currency, and indeed in some parts the only currency that will pass.

The smaller coins, an *alad* or half-dollar, and a *rub* or quarter-dollar, have never gained popular favour. For small exchange in the country they are replaced by bars of salt, empty cartridge cases, and many other such barter objects.

The inconvenience of all these forms of currency is considerable

and annoying. The silver dollar is heavy and a trading caravan needed several mules to carry cash with which to purchase the hides, skins, and coffee it had come to fetch. More mules again were needed to carry the bars of salt, about twelve inches long and two inches thick, which were the small change. The traveller must shave off an inch for a dozen eggs or a bottle of milk, or break the bar in two for a couple of chickens for the evening meal in camp.

The emperor has himself made efforts to counter native conservatism where he has felt it to be a bar to the progress of his country. The issue in 1933 of nickel coins bearing his effigy coincided with a decree establishing the centime as subdivision of the dollar, instead of the piastres and *besas* which had been in use in the markets of Addis Ababa, Harrar, and one or two of the larger markets, and had always fluctuated in value. These coins were not sufficiently long in circulation to give any indication of their acceptance.

The value of the dollar itself varied greatly, as it was dependent on the market value of silver in the outside world. Between the years 1920 and 1935 it had fallen down from \$4 to the £ sterling as low as \$19 and \$20 in 1930, finally emerging in 1935 at \$13 to the £.

During their occupation of the country the Italians forced into circulation their own lira currency, which came to be accepted over a large part of the country. Reimportation of the old currency was an essential plank in the British campaign of liberation. The British Mission carried in with them bags of dollars to finance their preliminary operations and later during the campaign all purchases made in the country were made in dollars. British troops, however, received their pay in East African shillings, and eventually, owing to the difficulty of maintaining supplies of dollars, East African money became the official currency along with dollars. Much hardship has been caused throughout the country by shortage of small coins and by violent fluctuations in the dollar-shilling exchange. The solution to these difficulties will undoubtedly be in the long run the introduction of a new Ethiopian currency tied to sterling, and this is under consideration by the Government.

For some months after the liberation of the country Barclays Bank (Dominion, Colonial, and Overseas) filled the gap between the disappearance of the Italian banks and the opening of an Ethiopian bank. On 26th August 1942 the State Bank of Ethiopia was established by imperial proclamation and incorporated by imperial charter four days later. That stalwart champion of

Ethiopia, Mr. C. S. Collier, the former governor of the Bank of Ethiopia, whose recent death as a result of a motor accident was a grievous loss to his friends and to the country, undertook the formidable task of organizing and staffing the bank and became the first governor until relieved by Mr. George A. Blowers, an American, who now holds the post.

## XIII

### THE CHURCH

THE story of the conversion of Ethiopia to Christianity is a romantic one, and dates back to the fourth century. But the underlying Judaism of the Ethiopian Church is of much older date, and its origin is wrapped in legendary history. ‘They circumcise; they reject as unclean the meat of any beast that does not chew the cud and cleave the hoof; they refuse access to the church to those who have had sexual intercourse the preceding day, regarding them as impure.’<sup>1</sup>

The threefold form of the churches, the ark with its tables of stone, and the great veneration in which it is held, the dances of the priests, are all evidences of this underlying Judaic character of the religion on which Christianity came as a later development—or of an uncritical reverence for the Old Testament. The story of the two brothers who alone were spared, on account of their tender age, and one of whom returned in his old age to become the evangelist of Ethiopia, gives an obviously authentic account of the introduction of Christianity. This was Frumentius, and from the middle of the fourth century until the present day the Ethiopian Church has remained staunch to its faith among the shifting scenes of Ethiopian history, with its feet firmly set upon the rock of Christianity against which the waves of Islam expended themselves in vain.

The Ethiopian Church is a daughter of the Coptic Church in Egypt, following its lead implicitly in doctrinal questions, and is monophysite in character, asserting that the nature of Christ is single, His manhood being absorbed in His divinity. In its ritual, calendar, and customs the Ethiopian Church follows closely that of the parent Coptic. They reckon their years from the ‘Era of the Martyrs’; their calendar follows that of the ancient Egyptian religion, having twelve months of thirty days each with five or six extra days between August and September, which is the beginning of the Church’s year. They observe the fasts ordained by the Copts in August and December, and an eight-week Lent. Yet to this they have added some purely Ethiopian practices. They celebrate the feasts of Our Lady, St. Michael, St. George, and the Nativity

<sup>1</sup> Jones and Munro, *History of Abyssinia*, p. 39.

once every month; they sacrifice ox, ewe, and she-goat on the dedication of a church. They use the *douen* to accompany the liturgical chants.

As a daughter of the Coptic Church the Ethiopian has always looked to its parent to provide its spiritual leader, and throughout the centuries it has been the practice for the Abuna to be a Coptic monk consecrated and sent for the purpose by the Patriarch of Alexandria. The Abuna had no authority to consecrate bishops and up to 1927 there had never been native bishops, though there had occasionally been more than one Coptic Abuna in the country at the same time.

When the Coptic Abuna Mattheos died in 1926, the Ethiopian Government tried hard to induce the Patriarch of Alexandria to concede authority to the new Abuna to consecrate Ethiopian bishops. This the patriarch would not agree to do; but, as a compromise, he himself consecrated four native Ethiopian bishops at the same time as he consecrated the new Coptic Abuna Cyril, and consecrated a fifth when he himself visited Ethiopia a few months later. This move on the part of the Ethiopian Government was of course an attempt to insert the thin end of the wedge, to lead to the severance of the Coptic connection and the creation of an independent Ethiopian Church. The motives were no doubt largely political and nationalist. It was not due to the urge of a vigorous church to gain its freedom. When the author discussed the matter with her own parish priest he was shocked at the idea of such an innovation.

Yet in ascribing the move to nationalist and political motives the whole story is not told. The emperor, and a few who thought like him, had undoubtedly a strong feeling that little reform of the Ethiopian Church was likely until the authority of the Coptic Church had been removed. When the Italians entered the country the Abuna Cyril was called to Rome; but he refused to agree to terms proposed by the Italians and retired to Egypt. One of the five Ethiopian bishops who had been blinded as a result of the gas attacks, is said to have been made Abuna by the Italians, but his authority was not widely accepted.

The priests, according to the custom of the Eastern Church in general, must be married before ordination; and in the event of the death of the wife may not marry again, but may continue their work if they remain unmarried.

Deacons are unmarried, and in order to ensure against their taking part in the service of the sanctuary while indulging in any

irregularity of life before marriage, the custom has arisen of using only boys in this office. They may be made deacons at the age of seven and cease to officiate after attaining manhood. There is, then, an interval before marriage and ordination to the priesthood, which, however, does not invariably follow.

The preparation for the diaconate and the priesthood is very slight, consisting of little more than the knowledge in each case of the actual duties to be performed, and the words of the service to be said by each. It is necessary to know how to read, but it is not necessary to acquire a knowledge of the Geez language in which the services are conducted. In theory a deacon must have knowledge of his duties before being ordained; but, as, in former days, with only one bishop in the whole country, opportunities for ordination had to be taken as they occurred, it was possible for a boy of seven to be ordained and to learn his duties afterwards.

As no real knowledge of the ancient language, in which all books were written, was expected, naturally no great knowledge of the Scriptures or of doctrine was required, and there were many priests ordained who were lamentably ignorant.

As there has seldom been more than one bishop, there is no division of the country into dioceses, and the priests of each church are responsible for the population of the district in which their church is situated. They have to see that all babies are baptized at the proper date—forty days after birth for males, and eighty days for females—and they teach prayers in Ethiopic to the children. Each Ethiopian Christian has a ‘soul father,’ or confessor, who is responsible for his spiritual welfare and is expected to see that he observes the appointed fasts and attends church services. He is also the confessor and friendly adviser of the family. Any Christian who moves to another village does not necessarily change his ‘soul father,’ preferring to continue with his old one, if he is reasonably accessible.

The marriage of his parishioners is also the concern of the priest, although in the lowest of the three types of marriage, that of the *garrod* or temporary wife, his presence is dispensed with. In the case of the bond wife, the priest-confessor of the family is there to bless the bridal pair before they leave the bride’s home, and this marriage has the sanction of the Church, although divorce can be obtained without difficulty.

In the third form of marriage, husband and wife, after three days of ceremonial preparation, take the sacrament together, wearing the golden mantles and crowns which are the possessions of the

Church. Such a marriage is indissoluble, and only such wedded couples are allowed to partake of the sacrament. They are very rare throughout the country, though among the higher ranks of the nobility and in the emperor's family such marriages are increasing. 'If they have taken communion together and become *gworabi*, there is none who can loose the bond save death.'<sup>1</sup>

When death approaches, a man will send for his confessor and ask for absolution after confessing his sins, and communion is sometimes carried to a man who is sick to death and so desires it. At the actual burial the priest will point out the place for the grave, and may even himself turn the first few sods, blessing the soil. If the dead man's family can afford the money, priests and deacons will come to the house before the burial, and the psalms and the funeral service in Geez will be read while chief priest and deacon cense the body. After that comes the funeral procession, the bier being set down seven times on the way if the family can afford the priestly dues involved. The actual interment is accompanied by further prayers of absolution, and after the funeral the family will hold commemorative services on the third, seventh, twelfth, fortieth, and eightieth day, and after six months, one year, and seven years. All these are accompanied by feasting, and priestly dues must be paid, so that the poor will dispense with such memorials after the fortieth day, which is the greatest feast of all.

The priests in this way live on the dues paid them by their parishioners. As in the case of the Church of England, there is no endowment belonging to the Church in its corporate capacity: all endowments belong to the parish churches. A head, usually a layman, is appointed by the Government for every church, whose duty it is to look after the property of the church and to see that the staff is kept up to its full numbers. From the endowments and offerings made to the church a pittance is allotted to the staff of priests and deacons and to some of the *debteras* or scribes, others of whom will serve voluntarily in the hope of being enrolled later on the staff. Apart from this pittance, every one who officiates at a private service, such as a baptism or a requiem, receives gifts either in money or kind, and a certain number of the staff are given, to support themselves, a piece of land which they may either let or till themselves.

The foundation of a new church, in the absence of any corporate church income, depends on the generosity of the local landowner, or *ras*, or the emperor, to endow it with sufficient land or charges on

<sup>1</sup> Walker, *The Abyssinian at Home*, p. 36.

land in the neighbourhood to support the staff. On one property, some thirty miles north of the capital, we paid dues to the Church, partly in kind and partly in cash. In cases where churches were founded in territory occupied by the subject races the clergy benefited in a worldly sense by the iniquitous *gabar* system; in the provinces where the *gabar* was abolished there were several delicate problems to deal with in which the Church was concerned.

It is natural that where the priesthood is ignorant, primitive, and superstitious, the standard of Christianity of the people in general is not high. The emperor has therefore sought to promote better education of the priesthood. He is the secular head of the Church—he was crowned in the coronation service as 'Defender of the Faith.' He has always taken this position very seriously and perhaps believes in the divine right of kings.

Prior to his coming to the throne he went through some years of patient yet persistent struggle with the old Abuna Mattheos on matters of education. With the change of Abuna in 1926 his way was clearer and the first step in this direction was the establishment of a new school by the priestly staff of St. George's Cathedral. Although in no sense a strong man, the Abuna Cyril has fallen in with the emperor's desire for improving the state of affairs in the Ethiopian Church, particularly in regard to ordination, and after the emperor's coronation plans were on foot for the establishment of a theological college. The difference that could be made throughout the land by the substitution of an educated and enlightened clergy for the present ignorant and reactionary priesthood is apparent when it is considered how the Church influences every stage of the normal life of the people. The fasts and feasts that are part of the weekly routine, the power of the priest confessor attached to each family, the influence of the priestly caste, as comprising almost one-fifth of the male population, the presence of the priest at all the most important occasions of family life—these make the Church one of the most powerful influences in the country, and as such, vital material to educate and reform.

As in many other directions, the emperor has tried to begin this task not by sweeping change, but by precept and example. He was himself married in church and has tried to induce others to follow his lead. When his daughter died he ordained that three days' public mourning was sufficient, his idea being to save the poor people the expense of forty days' mourning and the constantly recurring fees to the priest.

This in no way indicates a failure to realize the importance of

the religious life of his people. On the contrary, he has taken all possible steps to encourage sincere religious devotion. Mention has been made of the steps he took to extend a knowledge of the Scriptures by a wide dissemination of the Amharic text of the Bible. He himself has built churches, and in particular a new church in Addis Ababa of cruciform type. When the trouble with Italy started it was by his order that public fasts and days of intercession were ordained. In all his public utterances the expression of his religious feeling is marked by dignity of utterance and nobility of sentiment.

About one-quarter of the whole population are Mohammedan—these comprising the people of Jimma, the Guragies, the greater part of Harrar province, the Danakil on the east and the Wollo Gallas, and the province of Beni Shangul on the west. Antagonism between the Christian highlanders and the Moslem Gallas and lowlanders has never been acute, and in the face of the common national danger united religious demonstrations of loyalty were not infrequent in the capital.

The tribes of the far west and south-west are mostly pagan, as were many of the highland Gallas before the conquests of Menelik compelled them to adopt Christianity. The Ethiopian Church is not consciously a missionary church, but wherever an Amhara garrison is installed there a church will spring up, and the result is invariably that considerable numbers of the local population become Christian—at least in name. For this, among other reasons, the reformation and education of the younger priests is a work of national importance, the common faith that is gradually spreading over the outlying districts forming another powerful factor in the unification of the empire.

## XIV

### JUDICIAL AND CIVIL REFORM

THE judicial system of Ethiopia has been undergoing a revolutionary change since 1942 with the introduction of English judges and English procedure in all the higher courts and the abolition of the mixed consular court for the trial of cases in which a foreigner was concerned. The present chapter was written before the inauguration of these reforms and describes the administration of justice as it existed during the author's first period of residence in Ethiopia. Although the lower courts have been modified in some places by English methods, the indigenous system now to be described is still at work throughout the empire so far as summary jurisdiction and petty civil cases are concerned. A description of the changes introduced by the emperor since his restoration will be found in Chapter XIX.<sup>1</sup>

The law of Ethiopia is, as is natural in an undeveloped civilization, largely based on precedent and tradition. There are, however, two codes greatly varying in origin and antiquity from which these traditions have been derived—the old Mosaic law, and the *Fetha Negast*. It is the former, evidencing again the strongly Semitic character of their original culture, that is responsible for the old vindictive judgments—an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. The *Fetha Negast*, on the other hand, is an ancient code, compiled in the ninth or tenth centuries from the old Roman canon law of the days of Constantine, and greatly influenced by the decisions of the Council of Nicaea. It is clear that neither of these codes is suitable for a Christian African state which is anxious to develop on modern lines. Menelik himself had begun to realize its anachronisms and temper its judgments. The Emperor Hailé Selassié, while still regent, and working with the assistance of foreign legal advisers, drew up a code both penal and civil in 1924, which was put into general use, and though this did not supersede the old and greatly revered *Fetha Negast*, it was gradually ousting the latter from its place in the ordinary courts. In the emperor's *chilot*, however, the last court of appeal, *Fetha Negast* is always ceremonially carried in by a special public official called the *like*,

<sup>1</sup>Pp. 122-3.  
80

and from it the Afa Negus<sup>1</sup> pronounces judgment in the emperor's presence.

The courts in which the law exercises its powers are very varied and of great complexity. Litigation is almost a national pastime, as in parts of India—in fact, it is not unusual to come upon groups of children engaged as their fathers are, and with all the enthusiasm and vigour of their elders, in arguing their case before their chosen *dagnia*.

The simplest procedure between two disputants is to find a third party to act as judge or *dagna*, and nobody may refuse to perform this duty, if appeal has been made to him in the name of the emperor—'ba Menelik *dagna*' or 'ba Hailé Selassié *dagna*.' If both agree to accept his judgment he will then collect his 'jury' or 'observers'—from four to ten in number, and the case will be heard by the wayside or in the cornfield, and judgment given. If the matter proves too hard, this temporary *dagna* may decide to take the two litigants before the local *dagna*. This man holds a definite office by order of the *malkagnia* or district officer, and he can give judgment in both civil and criminal cases and impose a sentence either of a fine or of a few days' imprisonment. He can deal with all such types of case as would come before the local magistrates in England, and only if appeal is made from his sentence, or if the case is a serious criminal charge, or involves heavy damages, do the *wombars* summon it to their court.

The *wombars* are more in the nature of our circuit judges, but they are not mobile. They attend the governor of the province, and so their court approximates more to our own county courts, and the two *wombars* who preside in it, one to the left, *gera*, and the other to the right, *kagn*, have power to imprison and to fine, but not to flog. This power is confined to the governor of the province himself, or to the provincial court in provinces where the modern court with English procedure has been introduced.

The governor himself will preside at a court of appeal from the decisions of his *wombars*, and will sit two or three days a week in this capacity. This shows the tenacity of litigants; for the case will almost certainly have gone through two if not three hearings before it reaches this appeal court. It may even go further. In Addis Ababa there is appointed for each province a special *wombar* who may bring any appeal from the governor's provincial court to the *chilot* or court of appeal of the Afa Negus. This is the highest court of appeal in the land, and even in this court the Afa Negus

<sup>1</sup> The Lord Chief Justice. Literally, mouthpiece of the king.

has not the power of life and death—this lies absolutely in the hands of the emperor, who in capital cases becomes chief magistrate. No Ethiopian can suffer capital punishment before his case has come before the emperor, and it is in these special cases that the *liké* carries in the great volume of the *Fetha Negast* from which the sentence is read.

Up to the time of Menelik this power was occasionally delegated, to the great *rases*, or local kings of the old hereditary feudal provinces. But it was part of the policy of centralization of power in the emperor and his ministers that it should be withdrawn. In cases of murder the criminal had now to be brought to Addis Ababa for a final decision in his case. If sentenced, he was returned for execution to the headquarters of the province, or, if it was desired to make a special example of the punishment, to the actual village where the murder was committed. In old days public executions in Addis Ababa were not infrequent, and the author remembers occasions on which the town was 'out of bounds' to her household, when slave traders were caught and capital punishment meted out at the gates of the city. This (in 1921) was, however, the last occasion in the writer's experience; and the cutting down of the old tree of execution just outside the cathedral of St. George marked the end of this old and evil practice. From that time on executions took place outside the city. In ordinary murder cases this was effected within the walls of the compound erected for this purpose and might be by hanging or by rifle-fire. But traitors and slave raiders were still treated as cases for exemplary punishment and suffered their fate at some place beside a public highway.

Among the Gallas the practice of blood money was accepted, even in recent time; but no Amhara would agree to the custom. The victim's family were appealed to by friends of both parties, even by the Afa Negus and the emperor himself in some cases, to accept the *guma* and spare the murderer his fate. It is one of the great weaknesses of the *Fetha Negast* that there is no distinction between murder and manslaughter; but the modern penal code, while preserving carefully the respect and reverence due to the old code, is careful to differentiate and mitigate the punishment accordingly.

Many points about a case at law of the traditional kind are of interest and often of amusement to the foreign spectator. The trial has all the appearance of an impassioned drama. As on the old Greek stage every movement, every gesticulation, the very arrangement of the *shamma*, or plaid, previously referred to in the

description of the people's dress, has its own significance. The publicity of the informal wayside court, the tumult of eloquence of the protagonists, the interest, often outspoken, of the spectators who gather round even the most trivial case, these are all foreign to our ideas of the dignity and impassivity of the law. Still more so is the curious system by which both plaintiff and defendant stake the value of honey or a horse or a mule that they will win their case.

The procedure is as follows. The case is stated at great length by the plaintiff before the judge and his observers. There is a clerk or *tsafi* to each court, who makes a record of the evidence. The defendant then makes his answer, and it is at this point that the judge calls upon both of them to enter their stakes. These correspond roughly to court fees and may vary from the value of a measure of honey at a quarter of a dollar to the value of a horse or mule at five to ten dollars. In olden days a man might even stake his own right hand or a thousand horses; but in present-day custom the stakes are limited to the small amounts indicated above.

After the entry of the stakes the plaintiff and defendant must agree as to the witnesses to be called, and if such witnesses are unable to attend the next hearing of the case a *calati* is appointed to go and take the evidence, which he then produces when the case is next heard. The loser has to pay the *calati's* fee as well as the stake he himself has pledged. Theoretically the stake goes to the government treasury; but as the *dagnia* and *wombar* probably receive no fixed salary, these court fees are usually taken by the presiding judge in lieu of salary. It is noteworthy that the interpreter, or *simabalo*, is of great importance. The law is always delivered in Amharic; and though both the litigants and the judge may be Galla, yet judgments, even in a Galla province, must be given in the official Amharic language.

The cases described above are the cases between one citizen and another; but there are also certain public inquiries which may be made throughout a village or a district where cattle or property have been stolen or houses burnt. The *malkagnia*, or district official, calls representatives from every household, and an *afansata* is held. The *malkagnia* explains the charge, and asks these householders themselves to find the culprit. They sit debating and talking, sometimes for many days, before producing a suspect, on a majority vote, who is then sent for trial by the *malkagnia* to the local *dagnia*. If, however, they are unable to find a culprit, the more severe form of public inquiry, the *auchachin*, is set on foot.

This consists in summoning all the grown men of the district, and indeed, if suspected of complicity, the women also. They are collected in a zareba or enclosure, and may remain there as virtual prisoners for two or three weeks until the suspected culprit is handed over. This is rough-handed justice, the innocent suffering loss of time and working hours with the guilty, but it ensures a certain amount of good neighbourliness and a standard of civic behaviour in the ordinary routine of village life. The disagreeable and the unpopular may otherwise find himself by common consent the scapegoat when there is difficulty or doubt about the true offender. But, as a general rule, public good sense and an innate respect for the law of the country usually produce the real criminal.

In the matter of debt, the Ethiopian is probably unique in his treatment of creditor and debtor. When the payment of a debt falls due, and the debtor is unable to pay, he must call a surety or *was* for the payment of the money within so many days. If, at the expiry of this period, he is still unable to discharge his debt, the *was* is obliged either to pay the money, or to produce the person of the debtor. When he has done this, he is then himself freed from further obligation. The debtor meanwhile must either pay or surrender his person to his creditor, who will then imprison him. This being an entirely private matter between the two, the State refuses to imprison him; it is not its affair. So the creditor who might not have the place or the guard to keep his prisoner, chains him to himself and thus keeps watch upon him until by some means or other he has found the money.

Enough has been said about both courts and procedure to show that the indigenous legal system in Ethiopia is complex and minutely organized. It can be realized, therefore, that the introduction of a new penal code, based though it was on the principles of the old *Fetha Negast*, was a task fraught with much danger in a country which was deeply conservative where its historical institutions were concerned. In his preface to the code, therefore, the emperor pointed out how, over the centuries, the penalties had changed from payment in kind to payment in money. The principle of justice remains, he said—the law changes: the foundation is immutable, but its application is modified. He pointed out the chief reforms. Men must be judged by their motives, not entirely by their actions. The difference between murder, manslaughter, and accident, unrecognized in the *Fetha Negast*, was allowed, and the cruel rigour of the old law superseded by the humanity of the new. Further, for the same crime the money exacted in penalty should be

proportionate to the financial capacity of the guilty party, and in assessing all punishments there differing degrees of responsibility which must be taken into consideration.<sup>1</sup>

It was on such principles that the emperor, after many years of close personal study, was able to introduce his new code, which, if not perfect, must yet bear witness to the sincerity of his humanity, and the courage with which he undertook a task which his predecessors for over six hundred years had not dared to tackle.

To this must be added the construction of the new prison in Addis Ababa, which had for many years been a crying need. The two city jails were notorious for the insanitary, filthy conditions in which scores of pitiable captives suffered hunger, dirt, and disease. Typhus swept through them with dreadful regularity, the prisoners were dependent upon relatives and friends for food and clothing, and when deserted by these, relied upon the charity of those of the passers-by who listened to their laments.

The emperor built a new prison embodying more modern and hygienic conditions, and put in charge of it one of the masters from the Tafari Makonnen School, Ato Marsé Hassen, who had at one time been secretary to the Anglo-Ethiopian Boundary Commission.

The feeding, adequate housing, and general hygiene of the prisoners was provided for; but unfortunately this reform came too late to be of service, for although it had been formally opened, the first real use made of it was by the Italians to house political prisoners. This delay appears to have been due to the emperor's intense desire to attend personally to all the details of this reform.

<sup>1</sup> Professor Norman Bentwich has given the following account of the Emperor's code. 'An original note of the Ethiopian code is its humanity; the distinction which it draws between the offence committed by a person with knowledge and a person of position, and a person who acts unintentionally and who is uneducated. The basis of the distinction is found in the words of the Gospel; that He Who Knows Much Shall Be Punished Much, But He Who Knows Little Shall Be Punished Little. It is a characteristic of the code to find examples and reasons for differentiation in the Bible. The premise is laid down that the men who do wrong unintentionally are more numerous than those who do wrong intentionally. And punishment should not be according to the extent of the wrong, but according to the amount of understanding. Damages for certain offences, such as abuse and assault, are to be fixed according to the rank of the person injured. At the same time offences committed by officers and persons of education are to be more heavily punished. Generally, fines and damages are the main penalty for all except the gravest offences. One of the introductory chapters lays down a scale of reduction of punishment. Thus a monk, who lives in a monastery and is far from the law and news of the world, has a remission of three-tenths, a poor man who cannot know what goes on in the courts a remission of four-tenths, a stranger of a foreign country one-half, and a countryman who speaks another language four-fifths. Another chapter deals with the additional penalty to be imposed for the aggravation of an offence, where it is committed by a person of rank or office. It distinguishes, between ten kinds of offender, an oppressor, a lawless, a proud, an envious, a treacherous, a revengeful person, etc.' (*Contemporary Review*, May 1944, pp. 269-70)

and to the impossibility of finding time owing to the need for concentration on the business of the League of Nations and preparations for defence during the growing menace of Italian invasion.

Mention must here be made also of the mixed court or *Tribunal spécial*, in which cases between Ethiopians and foreigners were tried before a tribunal composed of an Ethiopian judge, with an assistant, and the consul of the nationality concerned. In this special court the legal code of the defendant was applied; and execution of judgment was in the hands of the special court, where damages were given against an Ethiopian, or he was convicted of a crime, and in the hands of the consul where the foreigner was liable or adjudged guilty. Although for many years there had been constant agitation, and indeed many attempts, to improve the organization of this court, its competence was undetermined, friction and tension were persistent, and much remained to be done to better the legal position. The perfecting of its judicial regime would indeed have gone far to remove causes of friction between the Ethiopian Government and the foreigners who were resident in the country.

In contradistinction to reform in education, public health, and similar activities which were naturally more in evidence in the capital than in the greater part of the countryside, reform in the penal code was applied throughout the provinces. Similarly, reforms in the administration of the customs laws were increasingly widespread. Corruption in administering the law and customs has always been as rife in Ethiopia as in any other eastern country, and the system under which the local *dagnias* collected the court fees in lieu of salary, and the local tax collectors farmed the taxes and customs dues from the provincial governors, were of course likely to produce the worst results. It is then a notable achievement that under the Ministry of Commerce, which was reconstituted in 1922 under Ato Gabre Egziabher, and grew rapidly to a position of authority over the whole country, the collection of the customs was completely reorganized and the depredations of the provincial tax collectors checked. Previously the revenue from provincial taxation had found its way, though much was lost by the wayside, into the treasury of the provincial governor, who paid a fixed annual sum to the central government or in some cases kept the proceeds in lieu of salary. Under the new organization government officials, sent out directly from the Ministry of Commerce, were becoming active throughout the provinces. In this way all revenue from commerce was being directed to the Treasury, and



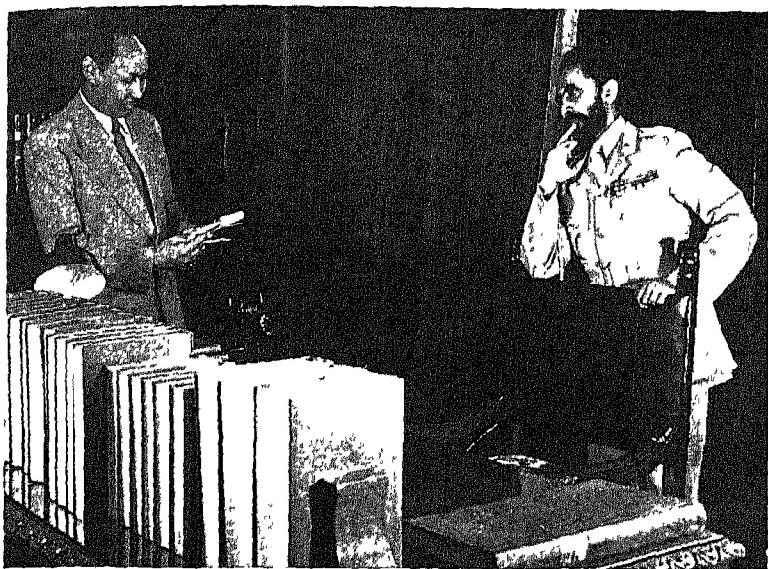
*Elliott and Fry*

The Emperor

(A photograph during his residence in England)



The Parliament Building (pre-Italian) at Addis Ababa  
(The town and the heights of Entotto in the background)



3 (a)

The Emperor with his Secretary

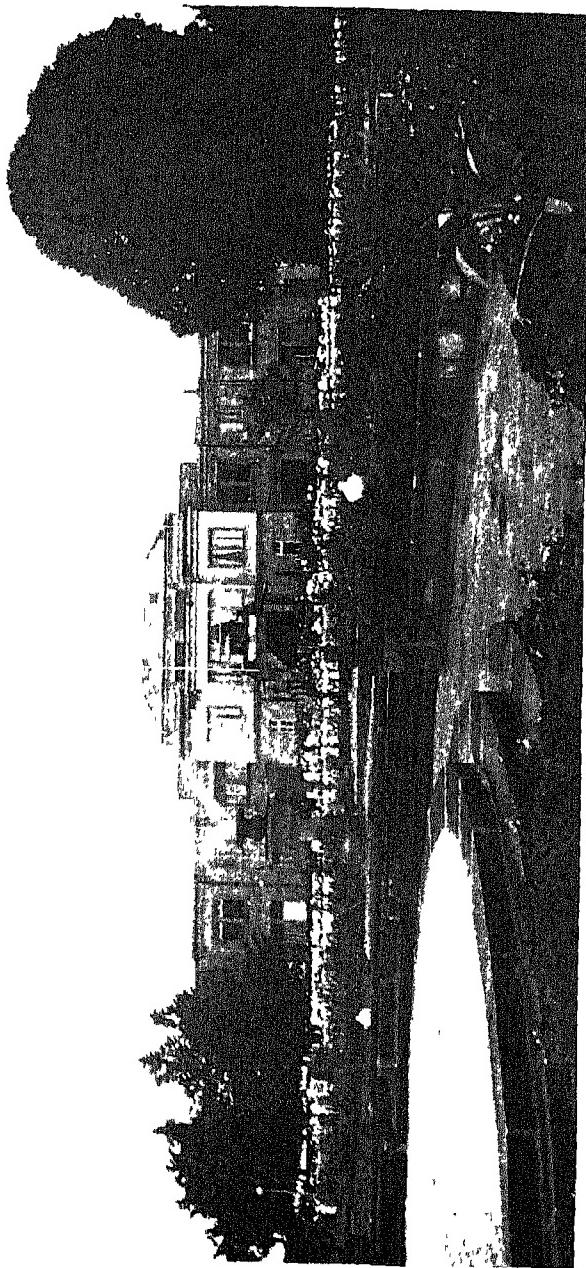


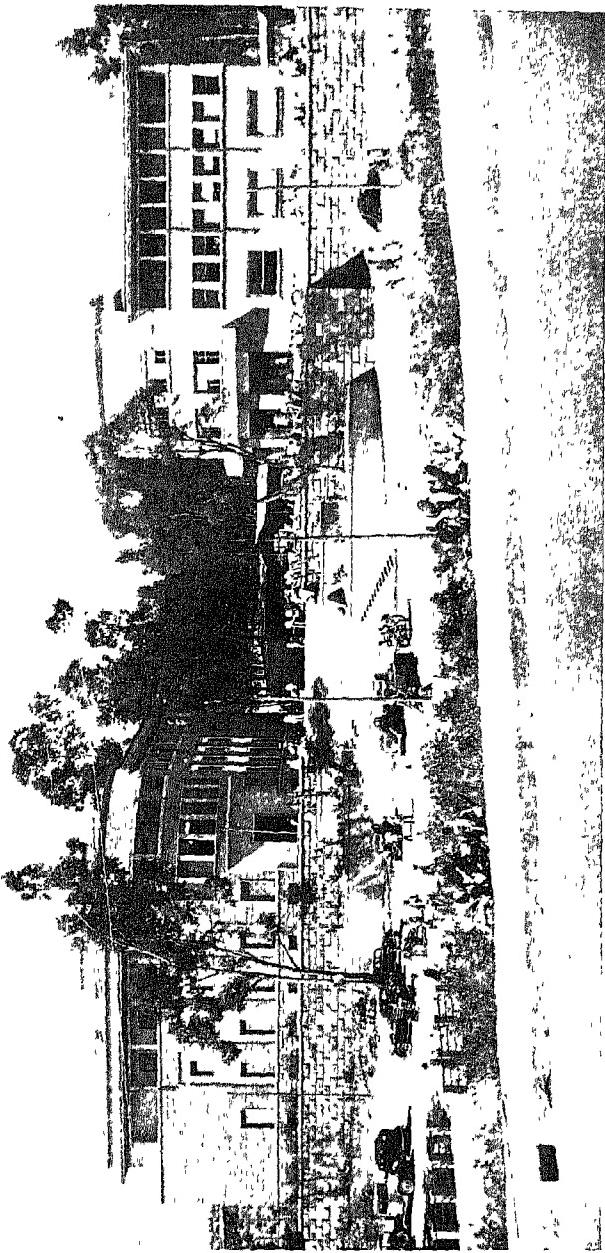
3 (b)

A Group of Elder Statesmen

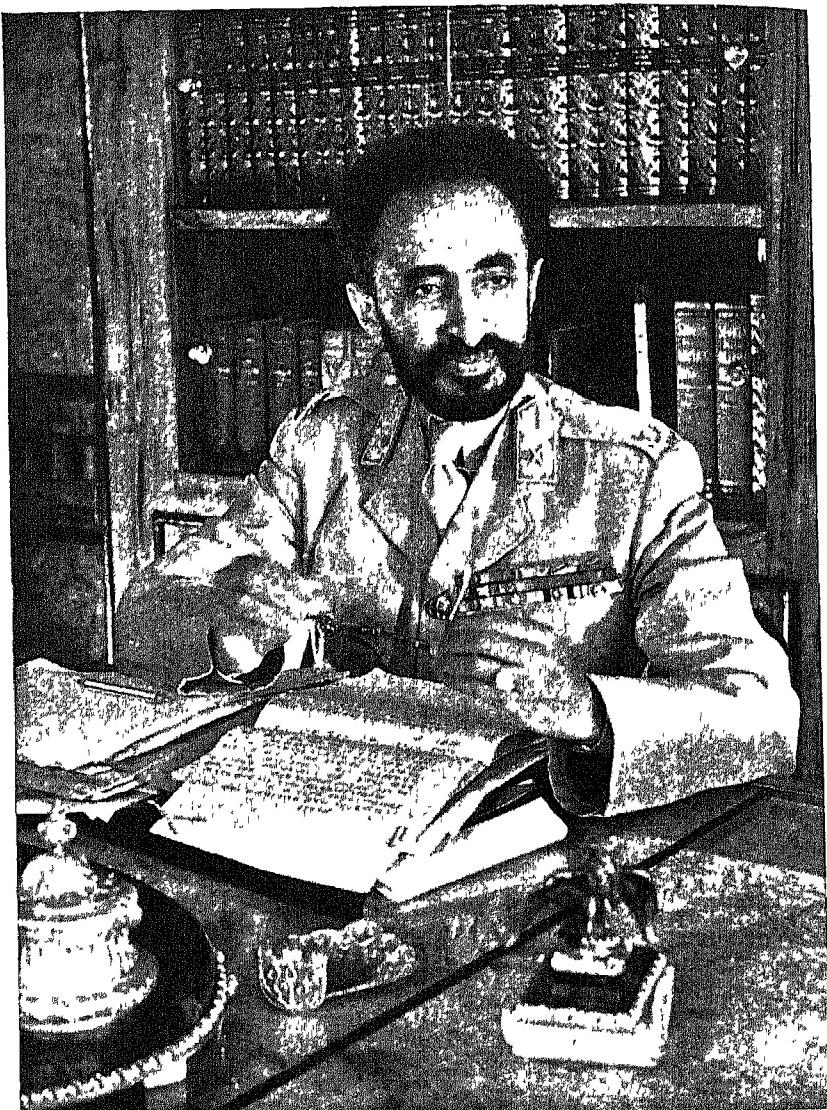
(From left to right . Ras Imru, Ras Seyum, Ras Kassa, the Itchegi (Chief Monk), Dejazmach Tayi, Betwaded Makomen Endelkatchou, and Dejazmach Amori)

The Imperial Palace, Addis Ababa.  
(School children greeting the Emperor on his birthday.)



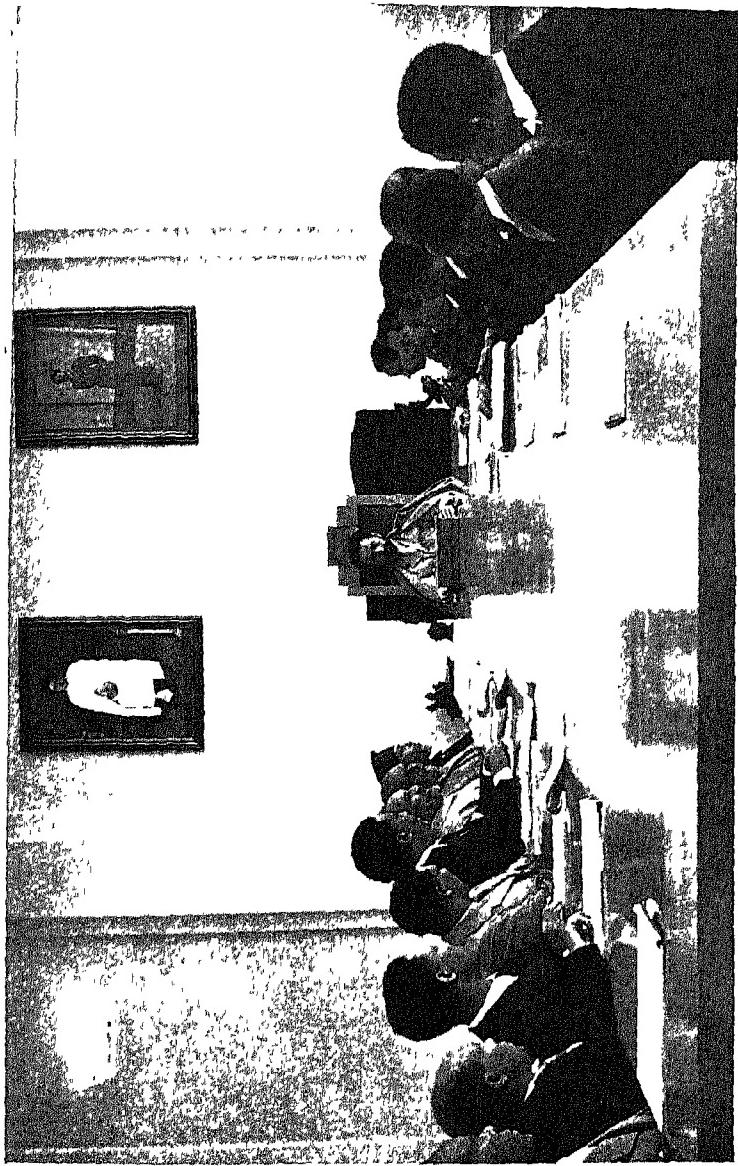


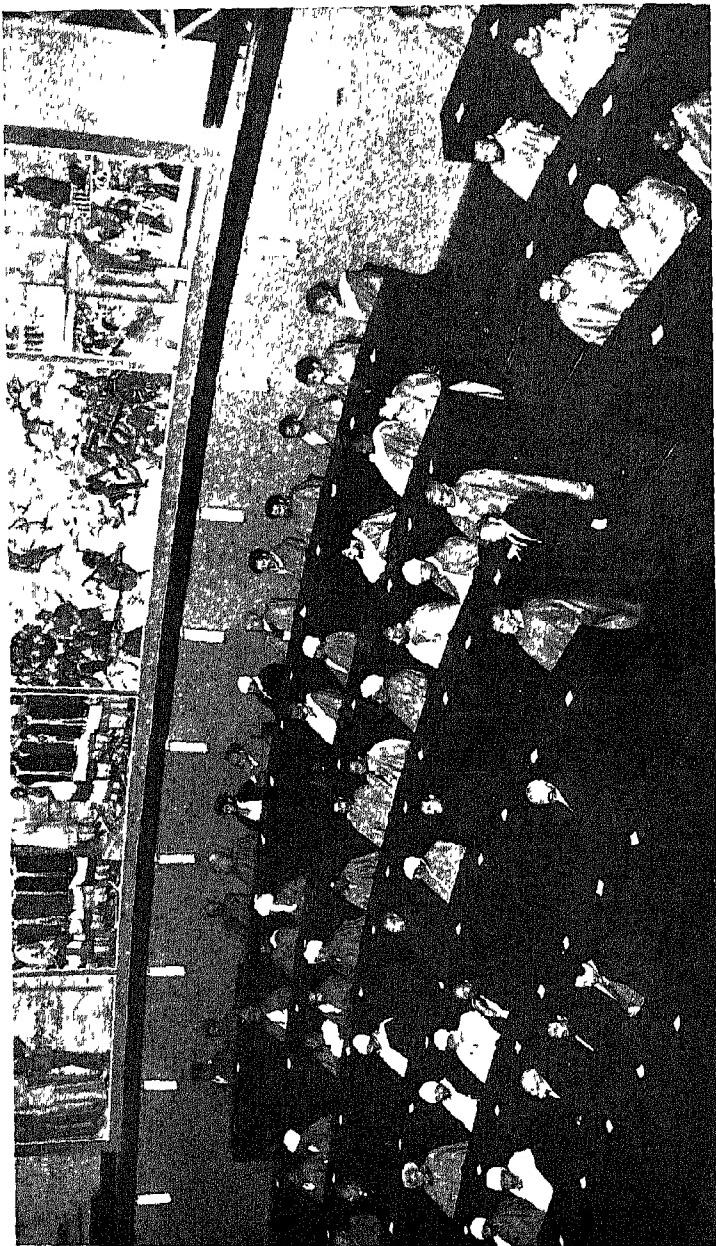
The Ministry of the Interior (Italian built)



The Council of State

7

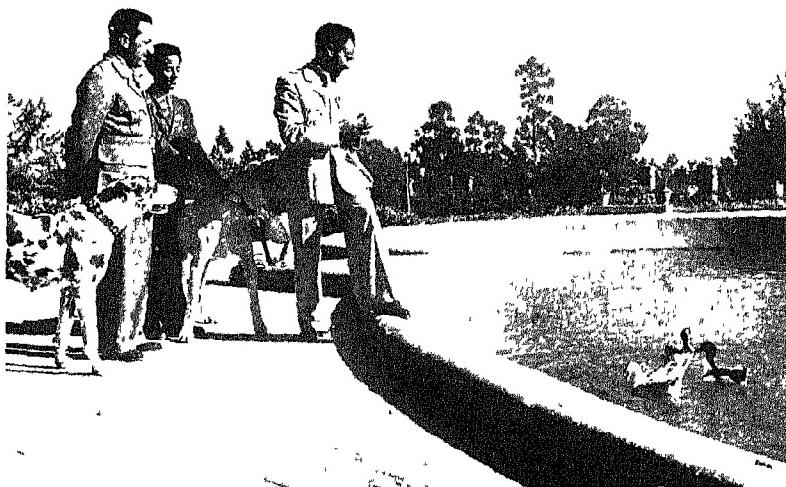




The Parliament in Session. (The Chamber of Deputies, see page 46)  
(The mural paintings are by an Ethiopian artist)



9 (a) The Emperor and Empress with the Crown Prince (*right*), the Princess Tenague Worg, and the Duke of Harar (Second Son)



9 (b) The Emperor with the Crown Prince and his Third Son, Sahalé Selassié, now (1946) at School in Scotland



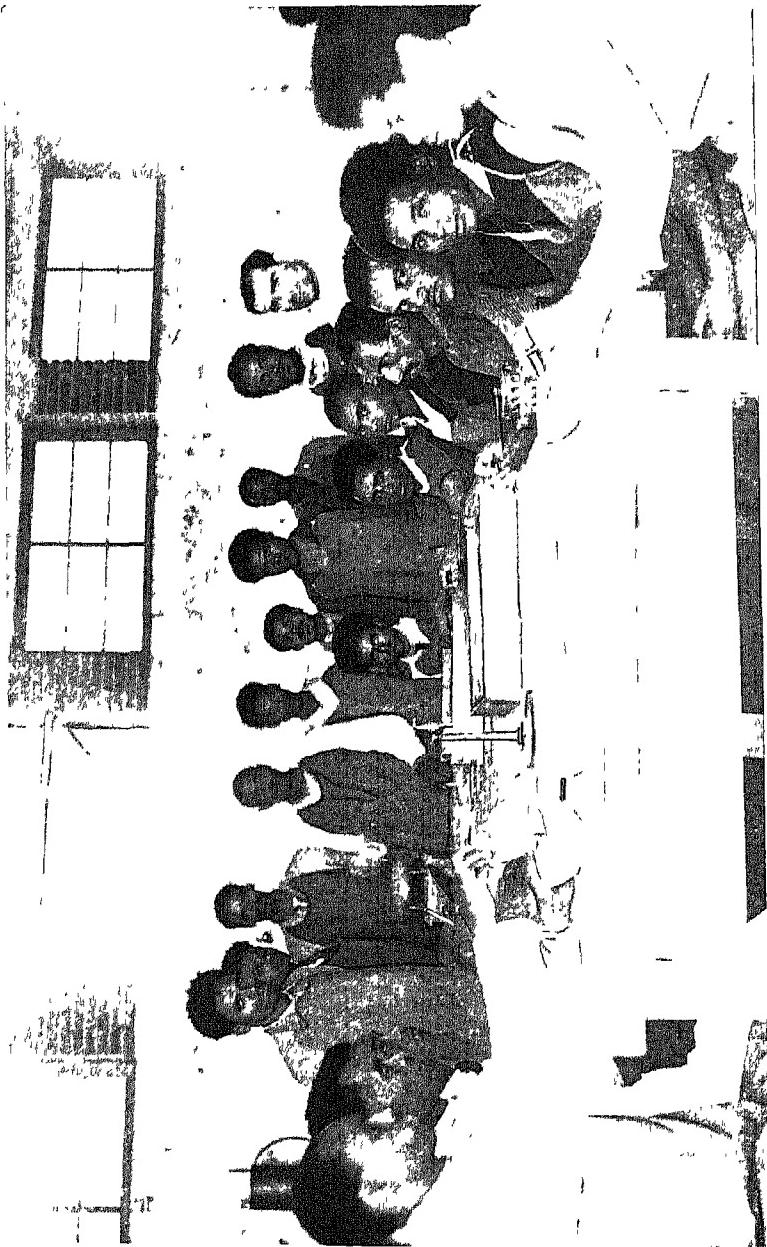
Officials of the Ethiopian Coptic Church  
assembled for the Entry of the Emperor into Addis Ababa

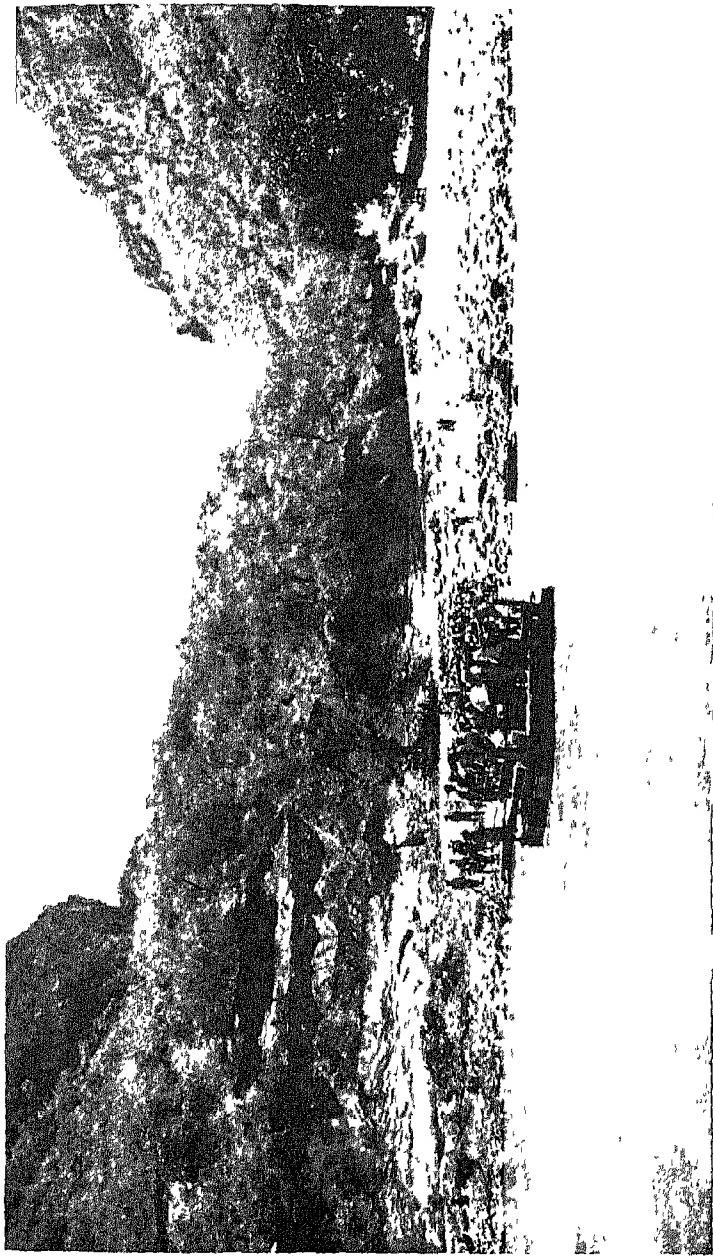
The Patriot Forces escorting the Emperor at the  
reoccupation of Debra Marcos

11



Training session in Addis Ababa





Crossing the Blue Nile at Safartah

Typical Scenery in the Plateau Country

14





People with Papyrus Boats on the Shores of Lake Tsana



16

Chusit (Smoke of the Fire) Falls  
(On the Blue Nile, twenty miles south of Lake Tana)

young men of modern education, more especially from the schools of the Catholic missions, were finding their way over the country-side, applying the rules and regulations of the Ministry of Commerce. It was, indeed, the only ministry that had spread its wings over the whole of the provinces, not excepting those of the great *rases* who, though angry at the loss to their own income, yet accepted the new order.

Even in Wallega, where no 'foreigner'—the title applied to anybody not born in the province—could hold any official post, the new system found its way; and the new *carnets* (receipts) stamped with the official receipt of the Ministry of Commerce were to be found coming into general use at the many hundreds of small toll-houses scattered throughout the empire, where the internal customs dues were collected, thus protecting travelling merchants and caravans from unlawful exactions.

## XV

### THE ITALIAN INVASION AND OCCUPATION

It was in the autumn of 1934—only four years after the coronation of Hailé Selassié as emperor—that uneasiness about relations with Italy began to make itself felt in Ethiopia. Up to this time to the casual observer they had been friendly enough since the Italo-Ethiopian pact of friendship signed in 1928, and seemingly confirmed by the visit of the Duke of Abruzzi in 1933. A quotation from Mussolini's speech after the Italian manœuvres of August 1934 may give the clue to the change then noticeable in the Italian attitude towards her African neighbour: 'It is necessary to prepare for war not to-morrow, but to-day. We are becoming, and shall become so increasingly because this is our desire, a military nation. A militaristic nation, I will add, since we are not afraid of words.'<sup>1</sup>

Arnold Toynbee points out that it was the necessity of diverting public thoughts from hardships at home to future glory abroad that prompted such utterances. Where could the glory of foreign conquest be more cheaply purchased than from the poorly armed and ill-prepared neighbours of her East African colonies—neighbours whose want of cohesion, and susceptibility to bribery, made them an easy field for the activities of the enemy agent; whose difficulties in controlling their outlying frontier districts were sufficiently well known to give plausibility to the charges levelled against them. Italian agents, under the cloak of missionary, medical, or veterinary enterprise, were steadily increasing their activities, and in this way a very useful network of intelligence was spreading over the country. The need for such enterprise was too urgent for Ethiopia to refuse its assistance, however suspicious of its ultimate purpose she might be; there is little doubt that this specious philanthropy stood the donors in good stead.

The history of the early months of 1935 makes sorry reading. An 'incident' at Gondar in November 1934, when the Italian consulate was 'attacked,' showed how feelings were at strain, though the emperor was quick to appreciate his danger and to forestall trouble by accepting the terms proposed as regards compensation. So desperately anxious was he to rest the defence of his country on the League of Nations that from the beginning he

<sup>1</sup> See *The Times*, 4th October 1935.  
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would countenance no action which might jeopardize a peaceful settlement of differences between Italy and Ethiopia, nor refuse any opportunity which might lead to better relations. The tragic sequence of events which followed the so-called settlement at Gondar is too well known to need more than a brief outline.

It was on 6th December 1934 that a peaceful world was startled by the news that fighting had broken out between Ethiopian and Italian troops at a place called Wal Wal in the south-east, near the frontier of Italian Somaliland. The Ethiopian troops were the escort of the Anglo-Ethiopian Boundary Commission which had just finished the demarcation of the frontier running with British Somaliland, and they strongly resented the presence of an Italian garrison sixty miles beyond the frontier of Italian Somaliland. That frontier had never been demarcated on the ground or even settled in detail; but, according to an old agreement and a recent Italian map, Wal Wal was well within Ethiopia.

There is reason to believe that the tribesmen who joined the Ethiopian troops had been incited by an agent of the Italians to attack their native troops. The Italians used armoured cars and there was heavy loss of life amongst their poorly armed adversaries. The Ethiopian Government proposed that the dispute be submitted to arbitration, but the Italian Government rejected arbitration and demanded heavy compensation. Consequently, the Ethiopian Government reported the incident to the League; and on 3rd January 1935, requested action under Article II of the Covenant. The League Council, however, on 19th January, after having induced the parties to agree to arbitration under the Italo-Ethiopian Treaty of 1928, decided to postpone consideration of the application of the covenant until its next meeting, ordinarily four months later. Meanwhile it appeared that the parties were not in agreement as to the scope of the arbitration: Italy refused to allow the question of the ownership of the territory in which Wal Wal is situated to be submitted to the arbitration commission, whilst the Ethiopian Government naturally insisted that responsibility for the incident could not be assessed without determining which party rightly claimed the territory in question.

By a series of postponements and chicaneries the questions at issue were shelved from month to month. The Commission of Arbitration met for the first time on 25th June, but immediately suspended its sittings as the Italian representatives refused to discuss the frontier question. The League Council, meeting in extraordinary session early in August, decided that the question of the

ownership of Wal Wal was not within the competence of the Arbitration Commission and instructed the members of the commission to meet and appoint an independent chairman.

Meanwhile General de Bono had been sent out to Eritrea at the beginning of the year, and troops soon followed him on the excuse that frontier incidents must be provided against. By March the Ethiopian Government became thoroughly alarmed at the continued flow of troops and munitions of all kinds to Eritrea and Somaliland, and protested to the League again and again from this time on without result. Its efforts to import arms were thwarted by the refusal of the British Government, followed by the French, to issue, from 25th July on, any further licences for the export of arms to Italy and Ethiopia. Italy was not buying in England, but Ethiopia was. Moreover, the French authorities at Jibuti held up consignments of arms for months on the ground that technicalities prescribed by treaty had not been complied with; and when these had been complied with, the railway company after the outbreak of war refused to carry them, owing to Italian threats to bomb the railway bridges.

On 3rd September the Arbitration Commission decided that neither side could be held responsible for the Wal Wal incident; but this incident was already almost forgotten in the excitement and apprehension felt throughout the world at the obvious and rapidly growing menace of Italian aggression; for a powerful army well supplied with transport was already lined up on the Eritrean frontier, the Italian air force in the colonies had been multiplied many times, and several new aerodromes had been laid out.

Britain and France had indeed made proposals thought likely to be advantageous to Italy for modernizing the administration of Ethiopia and opening the country to economic development and exploitation by foreigners, in a conference at Paris in the middle of August; but these proposals were summarily rejected by Signor Mussolini, and he refused to formulate alternative terms to the demand for a protectorate over the whole country.

On 4th September the League Council at last began to take the threat of war seriously, and appointed a committee of five to examine the situation and propose a settlement. In the assembly of the League on 11th September Viscount Templewood (then Sir Samuel Hoare) made his famous speech which contained the following noteworthy and reassuring passages:

'The ideas enshrined in the Covenant, and in particular the aspiration to establish the rule of law in international affairs, have

appealed . . . with growing force to the strain of idealism which has its place in our national character, and they have become a part of our national conscience. . . . The League stands, and my country stands with it, for the collective maintenance of the Covenant in its entirety, and particularly for steady and collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression. The attitude of the British nation in the last few weeks has clearly demonstrated the fact that this is no variable and unreliable sentiment, but a principle of international conduct to which they and their Government hold with firm, enduring, and universal persistence.'

Yet there was also a qualification, the importance of which was not generally realized until some three months later, as follows:

'If the burden is to be borne, it must be borne collectively. If risks for peace are to be run, they must be run by all. The security of the many cannot be ensured solely by the efforts of a few, however powerful they may be.'

Actually, as Professor Arnold Toynbee has observed, 'it was not the public proceedings in the assembly, but a previous conversation between Sir Samuel Hoare and M. Laval on 10th September, which determined the League's action and sealed Ethiopia's fate: for these statesmen, representing the two leading nations of the League, privately agreed on that day that no action should be taken under Article 16 in the nature of sanctions of a military character or of a kind which would involve any risk of war with Italy.'<sup>1</sup>

The committee of five failed to produce any plan which would satisfy both parties and, in view of the attitude adopted by Italy, there seemed to be nothing further that could be done in the way of conciliation. The assembly adopted a watchful attitude, and decided to remain in session after the normal business of the annual meeting was concluded.

This was the position when Italian troops crossed the Eritrean frontier on 3rd October 1935, and began their advance upon Adowa, under the command of General de Bono. Simultaneously General Graziani opened hostilities on the frontier between Ethiopia and Italian Somaliland. Both campaigns lasted about seven months. Although in many engagements the Ethiopians fought with gallantry, it became increasingly obvious that they were hopelessly outclassed by the modern armament with which a European power waged war. Even the natural defences of her difficult and mountainous country availed Ethiopia little against

<sup>1</sup> *Survey of International Affairs for 1935* (published by the Royal Institute of International Affairs), vol. ii, pp. 188 and 192.

the mechanical superiority, the aeroplanes and bombs, and the poison gas used by the Italians. The dropping of cylinders containing mustard gas from the air having proved ineffective, aeroplanes were fitted for spraying this deadly liquid, thus producing clouds of gas which enveloped the countryside, killing the inhabitants of many villages and all their animals. Ethiopian troops suffered heavy casualties from the gas and their morale was seriously affected.

Although the first three months of the war still gave some hope that the enemy might be held and delayed until the rainy season should still further hinder his advance, the decisive actions at the two battles of Tembien, followed by the defeat of the emperor's own forces at Lake Ashangi, opened the road through Dessie to Addis Ababa. Marshal de Bono, as a result of his refusal to use poison gas to speed up the invasion, had been superseded after the first six weeks of the war by Marshal Badoglio, and the latter now pressed on southwards. Making use of the rough motor road constructed by the Ethiopians between Addis Ababa and Dessie, the Italian army swept on towards the capital.

Organized resistance on the part of Ethiopia was brought to an end by the departure of the emperor together with his family, his Foreign Minister, and certain other high Ethiopians on 3rd May. He took train for Dire Dawa; but on learning there of the rapid approach of the southern army under General Graziani, who had already reached Harrar, he continued his journey to Jibuti, where he embarked in a British cruiser which took him to Palestine.

By this time the Italian army from the north had entered Addis Ababa, where looting and general disorder had followed the emperor's departure. A battalion was hastily sent down the line to join hands with General Graziani's army from the south, and on 9th May a decree was issued annexing Ethiopia to Italy, and investing the King of Italy with the title of Emperor. The following day Marshal Badoglio was appointed Governor-General of Ethiopia, and Viceroy, with full powers.

The military campaigns were over; but in a military sense it was a partial conquest only. Jubilant and grandiose proclamations of the founding of the Italian East African Empire ushered in little more than five years of incomplete military occupation.

The Italian army had reached the capital on 5th May; the emperor had left. Five years, to the day, were to elapse before it could be written that the Italian army had left Addis Ababa, and the emperor had returned to his capital. A brief survey of those

five years will enable us to see something of the events and influences which have operated on the minds of the Ethiopian people to break down the forces of isolation and tradition, and to alter their attitude both to their own system of government and to the world outside.

The entry of the Italians into the capital, and the junction of their armies from north and south, did not end hostilities. Resistance continued in the south, with some severe fighting, for the next nine months. Ras Desta Damtu, the son-in-law of the emperor, continued to fight fiercely along the foothills of Galla Sidamo until his capture and execution as a rebel early in 1937. Italian administration of her new empire was little more than a military occupation of strategic points and main roads. Military tribunals were set up, and Italian troops were continually increased until, by September 1938, there were 100,000 Italian and 100,000 native troops—mainly Eritrean and Somali—in the country. This does not include the Fascist militia—possibly 50,000 strong when Italy entered the war, as every able-bodied Italian was expected to serve.

At the beginning of Italian rule the policy laid down by Rome was that which had already been applied in Libya; and this continued with increased severity after an attempt on General Graziani's life in February 1937. He had succeeded Marshal Badoglio as viceroy and was distributing alms outside the palace when bombs were thrown at him from the crowd, severely injuring both the marshal and the members of his suite. Retaliation was swift and ferocious. Summary executions of many of the young well-educated Ethiopians who had remained in, or returned to the capital, the mass murder of two hundred cadets of the military college, and the wholesale massacre by blackshirts of the native population, were either ordered or, at least, encouraged. Over six thousand of the townspeople lost their lives before the terror was checked. The policy of repression and subjugation was more strictly enforced; and massacres occurred in many towns and villages when resistance was met with in the collection of firearms.

Italian intention was to govern Ethiopia for the benefit of Italy, colonizing parts of the country by settlements of Italians. The export trade of Ethiopia to foreign countries was to be developed to provide Italy with more foreign exchange; her imports were to be Italian only. Racial segregation was to be enforced in every particular, and, though in many cases this proved difficult to effect, strict regulations were laid down to ensure the separation of Italian

and Ethiopian quarters in the towns. Social intercourse was further checked by preventing the Ethiopians from using the taxi and bus services provided for Italians.

By such measures the Italians sought to gain control over their newly acquired empire; but, while such control might seem effective in the towns of Addis Ababa, Harrar, Dire Dawa, Jimma, and Gondar, in the country districts it was very far from being so. To Gojjam, the large and fertile province to the north of the Blue Nile, as a result of intensive propaganda, the Italians had at first been given easy entry, and opportunity to set up an administration; but they failed lamentably to persuade the Gojjamis that Italian sovereignty was an improvement on that of the emperor. A serious revolt broke out in 1938 which was fostered and directed by a committee set up by a group of young educated Ethiopians who had escaped the Addis Ababa massacre. They organized themselves under the title of Committee of Unity and Collaboration and provided a fruitful soil for the first stirrings of that national movement for liberty which was to welcome the advent of the British mission in 1940.

Nor was Gojjam the only area in which disorder and unrest were prevalent. Even the Italians were forced to admit widespread brigandage in Shoa and Amhara, where local chiefs were collecting rebels into organized bands and defying Italian authority. Near Ankober, Dajazmach Ababa Aregai had raised an army of some 100,000 men, and was writing to the emperor, now residing in exile in England, vaunting his prowess and independence of Italian rule. Farther south again Gherassu Duké was another leader of proved ability, whose boast it was that he had never once acknowledged or had any dealings with the foreign usurpers, and who gave short shrift to any of his fellow countrymen who entered into parley with the invaders.

In February 1937, the massacre in Addis Ababa had been followed by the slaughter of the priests in the monastery at Debra Libanos on a charge of concealing arms; and the same treatment was meted out to hundreds of persons in several of the smaller towns, to the horror of the population throughout the country. Stories have been proved true of families shut up in their huts and burnt alive because they were found in possession of arms.

There is good evidence that these and many other atrocities were actually perpetrated by the Italians with the object of terrorizing the population wherever resistance had been met with or arms were found buried or concealed in people's homes. The result,

however, was the opposite of what the Italian authorities expected. They were trying to subdue a people of spirit with a long tradition of independence; and the relatives and friends of those murdered by the Italians swore vengeance to the death. Some of the chiefs took the field, calling on the villagers to follow them; and where former chiefs had been killed new leaders often arose and were elected by the people as their chiefs.

Such a state of affairs, of which the attempt on Graziani's life was but a symptom, is indicative of the failure of his policy of repression and domination in Ethiopia. There is little doubt that it was this failure that led to his being succeeded by the Duke of Aosta. With his arrival it became clear that Italian policy had changed in the direction of appeasement. Some political prisoners were released, and efforts were made to substitute a colonial for a military administration. Police took the place of troops in the towns, though these had again later to be withdrawn. Ethiopians themselves were allowed—where they had not already arrogated the position to themselves—to wield some authority in village administration. This may have been quite as much due to the difficulty of finding subordinate Italian officials capable of such tasks, as to a desire for conciliation; further, the rivalry between civil and military authorities and the activities of the extreme Fascists had led to much confusion and mismanagement.

The Duke of Aosta, however, persevered with his general policy of greater co-operation with the Ethiopians. A new constitution had been promulgated in 1936 which claimed to destroy the old feudal power of the great *rases*, and divided the empire, including Eritrea and Italian Somaliland, into five provinces, each with an Italian governor assisted by an executive council, a secretariat, and a number of administrative officers and technical advisers. It also provided for six Ethiopians to sit on the advisory council which met annually. The military tribunals were now closed down, and a system of native courts, presided over by Italian officials, introduced for civil cases.

The first districts to show positive results for this new policy were those of the south and south-east—the old provinces, largely Mohammedan in population, of Harrar and Jimma. While, officially, the Italian administration afforded to all loyal subjects 'complete religious toleration,' it was to Islam that Mussolini, in conformity with the fulsome declarations already made to Mohammedans in North Africa, offered his friendship and support. As far as Ethiopia was concerned this was largely due to the policy of diminishing the

prestige and authority of the Christian Amhara—the former ruling race—in favour of the ‘industrious Harari and Somali tribes’ and ‘the Moslem or heathen Galla tillers of the soil.’<sup>1</sup>

These districts, however, corresponded also with some of the most fertile land, where coffee and citrus cultivation was already a thriving industry, and where good sites for Italian agricultural enterprise would be available. It was, in fact, here that some agricultural colonies for Italian immigrants were planted, as well as in two districts near Addis Ababa. These were ambitious, but in neither case particularly successful attempts, the total number of families which had reached Ethiopia by May 1939 being short of five hundred. There were, however, thousands of Italians who had come to the country either as soldiers or labourers, and who, though efforts were made to settle them on the land, tended to concentrate in the towns, where they became shopkeepers and artisans. Thus arose the first sign of the ‘poor white’ problem in Ethiopia; and there was a camp for unemployed Italians in the Kabana district of Addis Ababa. Many others were living in great poverty in the city itself.

It was in the field of social services that the Italian occupation conferred an obvious and acknowledged benefit to the country they had so wantonly assaulted. Hospitals in Addis Ababa were extended and, where necessary, re-equipped; others were established in provincial towns. Prophylactic stations were set up, medical motor caravans were periodically organized to vaccinate, to distribute quinine, and check epidemics. A modern laboratory was installed in Addis Ababa for scientific research.

On the educational side less was accomplished. Apart from good school buildings, which were erected in the chief towns of the six provinces for Italian children, little else was done. Even Quaranta gives the number of elementary schools as only seventy-five for the whole country, and in this respect preference was again given to Moslem schools where Arabic was taught. Arabic was indeed established as the official language outside the Amhara provinces and Addis Ababa. But there were not enough teachers or equipment for any real work to be done, though a school for the sons of notables was established, and two higher ‘schools of Islamic studies’ were projected at Harrar and Jimma. In this respect, as in the administrative service, the lack of young educated Ethiopians was sorely felt.

This, then, is the shadowy outline actually realized of the

<sup>1</sup> Quaranta, *Ethiopia*.

projected East African empire of which Italy expected so much, and on which she squandered so much. How quickly it collapsed when confronted with the realities of the campaigns of liberation is the story of a later chapter. We shall first see what the emperor was doing for his country in England and how Ethiopia retained her membership of the League of Nations.

## XVI

### THE YEARS OF EXILE

IT was on 2nd May 1936, as we have seen, that the emperor, whilst Marshal Badoglio's troops were rapidly drawing nearer from the north, left Addis Ababa for Jibuti. There he boarded the British warship placed at his disposal to convey him and his family and staff to Palestine. He arrived in Jerusalem, where there is an ancient Ethiopian monastery, on 8th May, and rested there a fortnight to recover his health after the anxieties and hardships of the latter part of the campaign.

His departure from his country and the entry of the Italians into the capital served as the excuse for governments which had been reluctant to apply any form of sanctions to listen to organizations of merchants who formerly traded with Italy, and now loudly demanded the raising of sanctions. A special session of the League Assembly was called and it was understood that Britain and France would favour the termination of the ban on trade with Italy.

The emperor had left his country in order to plead with the League for more vigorous and effective action against Italy, so he came to London to see the Foreign Secretary, Mr. Eden, and to prepare his speech to the Assembly. His arrival at Waterloo on 3rd June 1936 was the occasion of a remarkable demonstration of public interest and sympathy. The station and neighbouring streets were crammed with many thousands anxious for a sight of the emperor; and when he alighted he was wildly cheered. Addresses of welcome were presented on the platform by the Abyssinia Association and other societies.

The emperor completed the preparation of his speech at Geneva with the help of his French and American advisers, Professor Jèze and Mr. Colson, and he read it in Amharic in the Assembly Hall with great dignity, which was not disturbed by an outburst of whistling and catcalls from Italian journalists as he took his place on the rostrum. The journalists were escorted out and subsequently had to apologize to the League.

In spite of the cogent arguments and demands for justice in the emperor's speech, the Assembly proceeded with the prearranged plan of recommending to the member states the lifting of sanctions;

and one after another during the succeeding weeks they followed the lead of Britain and France.

Meanwhile in Ethiopia two of the emperor's generals who had kept their armies almost intact moved away from the capital, Ras Imeru to the west and Ras Desta to the south-west, where they held out for several months. Ras Imeru's forces were surrounded and forced to surrender in December, and Ras Desta was captured in January 1937 and foully murdered whilst a prisoner.

Although the emperor was still recognized as sovereign of the Ethiopian state by all countries except Italy and Germany, the question was raised at the annual session of the League Assembly in September 1936, as to whether the credentials of the Ethiopian delegates were in order, because the emperor by whom they were issued was no longer actively engaged in the administration of the government of his country. The credentials committee held several meetings and considered a proposal to refer the question to the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague. Since no decision could be expected before the session of the Assembly came to an end, it was decided that the Ethiopian delegates should be allowed to take their seats, but without prejudice to a reconsideration of the legal position on another occasion.

Immediately after the surrender of Ras Imeru, who had been nominated by the emperor as his viceroy, the Swiss Government informed the Consul-General of Ethiopia in Switzerland that the Federal Council had decided to recognize the sovereignty of Italy over Ethiopia. This followed the recognition of the Italian conquest by Austria and Hungary; but similar action by Switzerland, the seat of the League of Nations, caused the emperor great anxiety. He therefore addressed a letter of protest to the secretary-general of the League which was circulated to all the members.

During 1937 the position of Ethiopia from the international point of view deteriorated seriously. The Italian censorship was so strict that little information reached the outside world; and it was assumed that the Italians were making good their occupation of the country. The great majority of people in England and other countries came to regard the Italian conquest as permanent and the emperor as one more exiled sovereign deserving of sympathy, but without hope of restoration.

The emperor, however, was not the man to give up easily. He was determined to maintain to the best of his ability his country's rights as a member of the League of Nations, and in this he was encouraged by his friends and advisers.

What course of action should be taken at the annual meeting of the League in September 1937 was a question on which he sought the advice of several well-known international lawyers and parliamentarians. In view of the report of the credentials committee at the Assembly of 1936 already referred to, he felt that there was a danger that this time his authority to grant the necessary credentials might be definitely denied by the credentials committee, and that their report to this effect might be accepted by the Assembly. A resolution of the Assembly refusing further recognition of his sovereign rights was much to be feared, for it would be an encouragement to recognition of the Italian conquest and amount practically to denying the continuance of Ethiopia's membership of the League.

The emperor decided therefore not to put the issue to the test, but at the same time to maintain his right to send a delegation to the Assembly. He addressed a letter to the secretary-general of the League stating that, as there was no business affecting Ethiopia, he would postpone the appointment of a delegation to the forthcoming meeting of the Assembly. The permanent delegate of Ethiopia to the League would, however, be in Geneva, and the secretary-general was requested to notify him immediately should any business affecting the status or interests of Ethiopia be proposed. His Majesty would then immediately consider what steps to take to safeguard the interests of Ethiopia. This was rightly understood to mean that, if necessary, he would appoint a delegation to take its place in the Assembly.

Actually a full delegation of three persons was in Geneva during the whole period of the Assembly's session, closely watching the proceedings; and if any motion prejudicial to Ethiopia had been tabled the delegation would have walked into the Assembly Hall and occupied its vacant place; for the permanent delegate carried the credentials signed and sealed by the emperor in his pocket. No secret was made in Geneva of the watchful presence of the Ethiopian delegation; and there is little doubt that the desire to avoid lengthy and possibly acrimonious controversy in committees and the full Assembly, led influential delegates of states sympathetic and neutral towards Ethiopia to discourage the friends of Italy from introducing any resolution intended to exclude Ethiopia from the benefits of League membership. The Covenant makes no provision for expelling a member of the League except for violating its provisions, and of this no one could accuse Ethiopia; but it would have been possible for the Assembly to have adopted a

resolution to the effect that it was satisfied that Ethiopia no longer had any government or sovereign which it could recognize. Consequently the emperor would have been unable to exercise the one remaining right of some value which membership of the League conferred—that of addressing letters of protest to the secretary-general and having these and accompanying documents circulated to the governments of all member states, besides being issued to the press of all countries and printed in the official journal.

The emperor realized that above all things it was his duty not to let his country's case sink into oblivion. In the consternation caused by Hitler's march to growing military dominance and his successive annexations, it would have been easy for the world to forget the wrongs of Abyssinia completely; but the presence of the emperor in England, his public activities, attending receptions, garden parties, and non-political meetings, and his correspondence with the League, did much to prevent the world from forgetting.

The personality of the emperor also had its influence. Every one who had the honour of an audience was impressed by his unassuming graciousness and stirred to affection by his pleasant smile and solicitude for the visitor's welfare. When he appeared in public his quiet dignity and self-possession won the approval and sympathy of all. Religion and his faith in the Almighty are most real and vital to him, and enter into every phase of his life. Moreover he is a shrewd judge of men, not only of his own countrymen, but also of Europeans.

The emperor was able to keep in touch with the position of affairs in his country to an extent which surprised many who saw for the first time the numerous and detailed letters and documents in Amharic which he received, usually via Khartoum, whither they were sent by runner. Many of the chiefs remained loyal to him, and they wrote long letters describing in detail the conditions in their provinces, gave details of fighting against the Italians and of arms and ammunition captured, and usually ended with an appeal for the emperor to intercede with the League of Nations or the British Government. In some cases, they begged him to arrange for the dispatch of arms, which, of course, he was quite unable to do, as neither the British nor the French Government would have allowed them to pass through its territory.

The emperor also received some formal petitions to the League of Nations, one of them having been signed by some sixty chiefs, each of whom had affixed his seal. These appeals to the League, and a selection of the letters were forwarded by the emperor to the

secretary-general to be laid before the Council, and they were reproduced in the official *Journal* for 1938 and January 1939.

It will be remembered that Hitler brought about the *anschluss* with Austria in March 1938. Very soon German propagandists were launching accusations against the Czechs, and a general feeling of apprehension took possession of the Governments of Britain and France and the smaller democracies. Mr. Chamberlain, aware of his country's unpreparedness for war with Germany, feared to take a strong line and believed that appeasement could at least stave off European war for sufficient time to allow Britain to rearm.

Mussolini was already showing signs of abandoning his friendly alliance with France and Britain and giving hints of the solidarity of interests of Germany and Italy. The policy of the British, therefore, was to remove every source of misunderstanding with Italy in the hope of inducing her not to throw in her lot with Germany. Besides the bitter memory of sanctions, which had been imposed by the leadership of Great Britain, there continued the irritating attitude of Great Britain in refusing to recognize the Italian annexation of Ethiopia. Mr. Chamberlain therefore promised that Britain would recognize the Italian conquest and, further, would take such measures as were possible to secure recognition by members of the League of Nations, if not by the League itself.

It was a moving scene when the emperor made his plea before the Council of the League of Nations at the special session in May 1938, at which Lord Halifax announced the decision of His Majesty's Government, in view of the altered situation in Ethiopia, to regard the resolution of the Assembly of 4th July 1936, in which *inter alia* states members declared that they remained firmly attached to the principles of the Covenant, as having closed the Italo-Ethiopian dispute, and the resolution of the Assembly of 11th March 1932, by which states members of the League pledged themselves not to recognize any situation brought about by means contrary to the Covenant, as no longer binding. There were different opinions as to the best means of preserving peace. His Government would consider themselves free to face the facts as they were and recognize Italian sovereignty over Ethiopia when certain conditions had been fulfilled.<sup>1</sup> They hoped that members of the Council would share their opinion that the question of Italy's position in Ethiopia was one which each member of the League was now at liberty to decide for itself.

<sup>1</sup> Meaning the evacuation of Italian troops from Spain.

All the twelve members of the Council spoke on the subject, indicating the opinions of their governments for or against. This was a stratagem intended to reveal the opinion of the Council without taking a vote, since a resolution could only be valid if carried unanimously. It was known there would be two or three opponents; and, in fact, nine members supported Lord Halifax, and only the representatives of New Zealand and the Soviet Union spoke against recognition.

During the succeeding months one country after another accorded recognition to the Italian conquest, including almost all the countries of Europe. The principal countries which never recognized the Italian annexation of Ethiopia are the United States of America, the U.S.S.R., Mexico, New Zealand, and China.

As might be expected, the emperor was discouraged and depressed by this cruel blow. He had learned to like and respect the British people and had trusted with an almost childlike faith in the good intentions of the British Government. Though all his hopes seemed to be shattered, he never lost his faith in God and believed that somehow, some day, the Almighty would mete out justice to the injured and retribution to the aggressor.

His many friends amongst the British people helped to sustain his hopes and spirits. There were, of course, some of his friends and advisers who saw the growing military strength of Germany and Italy with misgiving, and who felt that Hitler's hysterical complaints and Mussolini's praise of martial valour meant that both of them were planning to engage in a war for imperial expansion. It might be five years, it might be ten years; but when it came, it would be a European conflagration, and Britain and France would be ranged against Germany and Italy. Britain, having command of the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal, would cut the communications of Italy with her newly acquired empire, and this would be the opportunity for the Ethiopians to revolt. So, perhaps with French and British aid, the Italians would be driven from Ethiopia and the emperor would return.

This argument rearoused the emperor's hopes, and he saw the importance of continuing to do everything possible to maintain membership of the League of Nations. As before, he sent a shadow delegation to the League Assembly in September 1938, with orders to watch the proceedings and to assert their right to take their seats in the Assembly if any resolution compromising the rights of Ethiopia should be introduced.

Meanwhile in Ethiopia, a group of young, educated Ethiopians

were taking counsel amongst themselves as to how the movement of resistance to the Italians could be made more effective. They had news of guerrilla operations against Italian columns and posts often successfully fought; but there was also news of jealousies between Ethiopian chiefs which sometimes had led to bloodshed between their retainers and local levies. These young men decided to form a 'Committee of Union and Collaboration,' with the object of composing the differences between the chiefs and securing as much unity of action as possible in planning attacks on the Italians. For this purpose it was necessary that the chieftains in different parts of the country should be in correspondence with one another, and reliable messengers were found to convey letters between them.

A further measure to foster the spirit of nationalism which was just beginning to grow was the circulation of a printed news sheet. Two Italian soldiers who had deserted and were sympathetic to the Ethiopian cause assisted the young men in operating the printing press which produced the news sheet. The secret distribution of this far and wide throughout the Ethiopian Empire undoubtedly had considerable effect in rousing the hopes of the people for deliverance from Italian oppression.

Hearing of the activities of this committee and with the object of assisting in uniting the efforts of the chiefs, the emperor arranged for one of his most trusted officials, Mr. Lorenzo Taezaz, who had been with him throughout his stay in Europe, to make a secret visit to Ethiopia. Mr. Taezaz left England in the summer of 1939 for Cairo, where he obtained the interest of the British general staff and their assistance in proceeding via Khartoum to the frontier near Gallabat.

Mr. Taezaz toured the province of Gojjam and neighbouring districts for about a month in Ethiopian officer's uniform, with a considerable escort of soldiers also in Ethiopian uniforms, without meeting any Italians; for these 'conquerors' were already confined to well-fortified towns. He made a very valuable report to military headquarters in Cairo and returned to England during the winter 1939-40 after the outbreak of war in Europe and the collapse of Poland.

There was some disappointment amongst Ethiopians that Italy remained neutral, or at least non-belligerent, for so long; but at last, when France was clearly unable to invade Italy, Mussolini struck her in the back. On 10th June 1940 he declared war on France and Britain, and his troops in Ethiopia invaded the Sudan and British Somaliland, occupying the Kassala district of the former

and the whole of the latter after gallant resistance by a small British force.

The emperor immediately left Bath for London, where he waited as patiently as he could whilst the War Office arranged with the Royal Air Force to transport him and his secretaries to Cairo and thence to Khartoum, where he arrived early in July. After meeting the governor of the Sudan, he took up his residence in a house placed at his disposal by the Government. There ensued a coming and going of messengers from and to all parts of western Ethiopia as the chiefs paid their respects to their emperor and received his instructions. The emperor was also occupied with negotiations with the British authorities, and afterwards with plans for the coming campaign. Meanwhile a small British mission had crossed the Sudan frontier on 12th August, with the object of making contact with the Ethiopian leaders and exploiting the situation to the best advantage of our forces which were preparing to destroy the Italian armies in Ethiopia. This mission, in spite of many hardships and adventures, achieved its object of gaining the collaboration of the chiefs and their levies in harassing the Italians and dispersing their forces, as will be related in the next chapter.

## XVII

### THE RESTORATION

THE story of the liberation of Ethiopia, and of the reinstatement of the emperor within an actual period of fighting of only six months, is an outstanding tribute to the skill of British commanders, the courage and perseverance of British and imperial troops, and the excellence of the motor roads which Italy had built at enormous expense and to her own undoing. But the part played by the patriot forces in Gojjam and elsewhere must not be underrated. It was they who laid the train and set light to the fuse which was to touch off the general explosion; and when the final assault on Gondar, the last stronghold, took place, patriot forces were there to take their share in completing the overthrow of Italian military domination in Ethiopia.

It was the task of the British mission which entered Ethiopia on 12th August 1940 to give news of the emperor's arrival in the Sudan, to meet and instruct the patriot leaders as to the most useful part they could play, to arrange a route for the entry of arms and ammunition, and so to play on the nerves of the Italian forces in the Gojjam area as to discourage them from any offensive action against the Sudan or reinforcement of their troops elsewhere. In this way the revolt was to be spread at the fitting moment, neither too early nor too late, throughout the whole Ethiopian empire. Disaster to the mission was at all costs to be avoided, as it was considered that it would be better to send no mission at all than that it should be captured, or in other ways liquidated by the enemy. There were five British members of the mission: Colonel D. A. Sandford, Captain R. A. Critchley, Lieutenant C. Drew, R.A.M.C., as medical officer, Sergeant-major G. S. Grey, and Signalman T. W. Whitmore. With them went, as delegation from the emperor, a remarkable group of young Ethiopians, who have all since made their mark. Azazh Kabada Tasama, the emperor's personal representative, is now governor of Addis Ababa; Ato Getahun Tasama, secretary of the Gojjam Committee of Union and Collaboration, after serving as director-general of the Ministry of the Interior is now first secretary at the Ethiopian legation in Washington; Ato Assegehein Araia, a member of the same committee, is now director-general of Borana province; Ato Gabra Maskal, who

had worked with the same committee and, among other accomplishments, was a first-class wireless operator, is now director-general of the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs; and Lij Mared Mangasha, a young man of good family, who had worked unobtrusively with Sandford in Cairo over the preparations for the dispatch of the mission, is now personal A.D.C. to the emperor. The rest of the Ethiopian staff consisted of interpreters, servants, wireless operators, and some fifty mule-men. The mission were not themselves a fighting force, and relied for protection on the patriot forces with whom they came in contact.

The greatest danger to the mission was obviously to be faced when entering the country and slipping through the Italian forces guarding the frontier. Safety was dependent, not on their having adequate forces for protection, but on their moving always ahead of any news that would leak out as to their movements.

To reach Gojjam, their objective, they had first of all to cross the Italian motor road running close to and parallel to our frontier. Then they had to traverse eighty miles of desert scrub and foot-hills in order to reach the escarpment of the plateau. Having climbed this, they had to slip through the ring of garrison towns and forts with which the Italians held Gojjam province. Once in the mountainous region in the middle of this circle they would feel comparatively safe. The transport and personnel of the mission were assembled at Doka some fifty miles back from the frontier. On 6th August they set out from this point in the direction of the Gondar road, but doubling back on their tracks they made for a point in the frontier twelve miles south of Gallabat, then in enemy hands. They were warned that their plans were probably known, as a party that had been dispatched a week previously to give news to friendly chiefs was known to have been ambushed. At the first midday halt, they flushed a couple of Gumz hunters, who made off at their approach. Most of these Gumz were in Italian pay, and were employed by them to watch on the frontier tracks to interfere with our communications. For this reason Sandford decided that the party should push on, cross the frontier as quickly as possible, and blaze their own trail through the bush, rather than follow any of the known tracks. By 5 p.m. they had reached the Metemma-Guba road, along which there were tracks of a strong enemy patrol which had crossed the route of the mission on the previous evening. Slipping across the road in the growing dusk, they were swallowed up in the bush.

After some days of fairly good going they reached and camped

close to the foot of a mountain on which stood the Ethiopian monastery of Mahaber Selassié, up to which Colonel Sandford climbed in the hope of gleaning news of the situation. With him went Azazh Kabada and they were kindly received; in accordance with the rule of the monastery the monks made them welcome and performed the ceremony of washing their feet as Christ washed the feet of His disciples. It is the rule of their order that they must take in the traveller, and they had on one occasion rescued the crew of an Italian aeroplane which had crashed near the monastery, attended to their hurts, and escorted them to the nearest Italian post in safety. The Italians in reply had first bombed and then raided the monastery, killing many of the monks and burning the place out.

The information given to Colonel Sandford by the monks confirmed him in his view that they could safely make for Sarako on the plateau and spend a few days there refitting. They reached there on 20th August.

Since crossing the frontier, they had crossed eight rivers in flood, had traversed thick and difficult country, and the men and mules were very tired. The transport position indeed proved to be very serious. It was therefore decided that the doctor and two signallers should be left at Sarako, where patriots were in some strength under an energetic leader and where they would be comparatively safe, and that Colonel Sandford should press on with Captain Critchley and Azazh Kabada, and should send back transport from Zibist to bring up the rest of the party.

On 29th August, Sandford and Critchley left for Zibist, the rest of the party consisting of Azazh Kabada, Getahun Tasama, Assegehein, Gabra Maskal (wireless operator), and about twenty servants and mule-men. This entailed descending to the hot plains again, and skirting the escarpment which was held by the Italians, before climbing up to the plateau again at Zibist, where the next friendly chief would be found. They had twenty mules and carried with them a wireless set and two thousand dollars. This march was perhaps the most arduous of the whole journey; the weather was very bad and the way difficult. The mules began to crack up and it was an exhausted party which struggled up the five thousand feet to Zibist with only eleven mules left. Most of their personal kit and stores had had to be jettisoned, but they had preserved the wireless (their life-line) and a diminishing store of dollars.

Colonel Sandford sent Assegehein ahead with letters to Fitaurari Ayellu Makonnen, chief of the Zibist area, to warn him of their

approach. Unfortunately he had been away with his troops and only returned to his village, in response to this summons, on 9th September, as the party itself arrived on top of the escarpment. They arranged to meet the next morning; this project was delayed by the arrival of an Italian plane which circled low and dropped bombs without effect, but towards midday the party met Ayellu, and with impressive ceremony the emperor's proclamation and letters were read.

As the party was proceeding to a feast to which Ayellu had then invited them, they were stopped by a runner who brought news that Italian troops were advancing a few miles to the east and that an Italian raid upon them seemed to be in progress. It soon transpired that this was true, and also that a considerable force was advancing upon them from the north-east as well. Ayellu had dismissed his men the evening before to their homes; he therefore asked Sandford to withdraw with his party to the edge of the escarpment, while he collected his men to slow up the enemy's advance. By the evening the enemy had occupied Ayellu's village and their camp and burned his house. The party, at Ayellu's request, loaded up at dawn and slipped down to a cave some eight hundred feet below the top. By 10 a.m. the enemy had occupied the night's camp and it seemed clear that they were out to capture the party in particular, and that the latter must move quickly. An Italian plane kept roaring over the cave, shaving the side of the cliff. It was decided to leave the mules and everything that could not be carried on their persons in the cave, and to descend the escarpment as quickly as possible. As they slipped through the bushes below the cave, they were spotted by the enemy above, who opened machine-gun and rifle fire and even hurled bombs. The party were ordered to scatter and make their own way down; this entailed slipping and clambering down three or four thousand feet of rock so steep that none of them would have tackled it in cold blood. By three o'clock the whole party bar two were collected at the bottom and waded for an hour along the river which flowed through the valley. By dusk they reached a village where they spent the night.

It seems doubtful whether Torelli, the Italian commander, knew of the exact whereabouts of the party. He searched the huts at the top and offered a reward of a thousand dollars for any information about the party; but, on getting none, was afraid of going down the gullies below the top. He withdrew the following afternoon to Dargila, after seizing grain and foodstuffs and damaging the crops.

On 14th September the party returned to Fitaurari Ayella's house and their delayed feast. The following morning a letter arrived from Dajaz Mangasha, to whom an urgent appeal for help had been sent, to say that he had moved with his forces to the Little Abbai River and would await them there, and had meanwhile sent an escort to meet them.

Colonel Sandford had decided to send Critchley back to make a reconnaissance of the Belaia Mountain, which dominated the routes from Roseires in the Sudan to Zibist and other points on the plateau. He was in touch with a friendly chief, Fitaurari Tafara, who inhabited the mountain, and he thought that the occupation of Belaia would help to secure the passage of convoys later on. Critchley rejoined Sandford on the 9th October, after a thorough reconnaissance of the whole area, and it was largely on his report that subsequent arrangements were made to use Mount Belaia as an advance base.

Colonel Sandford, with the rest of the party, left Zibist on the last lap of the journey to the Gojjam mountains, accompanied by Ayella and two hundred men. They reached the highest point of the Zibist massif by dusk, and, in a long night march, traversed part of the plain between them and the Little Abbai and crossed two rivers in flood. They lay up in a village the next morning to avoid the daily Italian air patrol. They had met Mangasha's escort during the night, and set off at about 11 a.m. in a long column, only too easily visible from the air. As they reached the road at a point only eight miles from Dangila, they were, with surprising casualness, led past a busy native market! The whole population were intensely excited, and since the presence of an Englishman and a large patriot force could scarcely be concealed, the news reached Torelli in a very short time. He was out along the road, by the evening, with lorry-borne forces, but was too late. The party had crossed the Ashwar River and was near enough to Mangasha's main forces to make him hesitate. Early next morning Colonel Sandford and his party crossed the Little Abbai and met Mangasha on the opposite bank. The two rivers, the Ashwar and the Little Abbai, were both deep and very cold, and their crossing by swimming was accompanied by heavy storms. On perceiving the bedraggled state of the party, Mangasha kindly cut short the ceremony of welcome after the proclamation of the emperor had been read and a *feu de joie* fired from both banks!

Colonel Sandford was now through the circle of Italian forts and had with him Azazh Kabada, Getahun, and Assegehein. There

remained Captain Critchley and the doctor's party still to bring through. Another member of their mission, who had set out to join them about a fortnight after they had crossed the frontier, was ambushed at Goshambo and, though exact information of what occurred has never been received, was undoubtedly killed. This was Arnold Weinholt, whom many friends in Australia and East Africa will remember for the gallant deeds he performed as a scout in East Africa in the last war. He had become an ardent supporter of the Ethiopian cause when the Italians invaded Ethiopia in 1935, and had flown from Aden to Khartoum to volunteer his services to the mission.

Having reached Mangasha, Sandford was in a position, at last, to begin his real work, and by 25th October he had broken the back of it in western Gojjam. He had seen nearly all the leading chiefs and, with Azazh Kabada's invaluable assistance, a pact of co-operation had been made between Dajazmach Mangasha and Dajazmach Nagash, the two overlords who had never found it possible to co-operate before. They had formulated a plan of action and had begun to put it into effect. Briefly, the idea was to prevent the enemy from reinforcing his troops in western Gojjam, to clear the districts bordering the escarpment of the enemy, and make arrangements for the collection of transports and escorts for convoying of war material from the Sudan into Gojjam.

It was always very difficult to preserve secrecy with regard to plans, and the Ethiopian intelligence system was, moreover, surprisingly bad. Colonel Sandford found it necessary to organize his own system of agents and messengers in order to keep himself informed of the situation.

On 25th October Sandford received disturbing news of the assembly of large enemy forces in eastern Gojjam, and of the expected arrival of reinforcements for them from Addis Ababa. It was evident that unless something was done to occupy and contain these forces, the pressure upon western Gojjam would become more than Mangasha and Nagash could withstand; he therefore left Critchley, who had just rejoined him, to keep things going in the west, and set out himself to the east to see what could be done. His journey to eastern Gojjam was an arduous one, carried out mostly at over eleven thousand feet, and once over a range fourteen thousand feet high. He was absent from his headquarters, which he had established at Sakala, for three weeks, covered over two hundred miles, and made contact with all the leading chiefs.

The plan Sandford tried to make involved the capture of Keira,

a small post of no great importance, the investing of Mota and Bichana, the cutting of the road between Debra Markos and Buré, and the bringing of as much pressure to bear upon Debra Markos as the patriots were capable of. The plans were not carried out with any measure of co-ordination, but in any case the object of his mission was achieved; no reinforcements were sent from east to west, and in fact, at least one battalion was withdrawn from Buré to Dembecha, so greatly was the Italian command troubled by the growing disturbances of the whole district.

Sandford arrived back at his headquarters, which were now installed at Sakala in the mountains close to the banks of the Blue Nile; and on 20th November an old Vincent 1930 flapped over the mountains and landed on a landing-ground which had been hastily prepared. The aircraft was flown by Pilot-Officer Collis, and with him came Major Wingate (as he then was)<sup>1</sup> and Makonnen Desta, one of the young Ethiopians on the emperor's staff, and an R.A.F. sergeant-observer. To find the mission's headquarters in the mountains was a risky piece of work most skilfully performed; maps of the country were very inadequate and there were bases for enemy fighters within fifty miles. Wingate had recently been appointed staff officer to General Platt with special charge of the Gojjam venture; and it was a characteristic step carried out with a determination peculiarly his, that he should have insisted on coming to talk things over personally with Sandford. R.A.F. co-operation in the matter was typical of the resource and assistance which they never failed to put at the service of the mission.

The news of the landing of a British plane at Sakala, and the dropping of arms, ammunition, money, and stores by other planes a few days later at the same spot, and the bombing of the Italian garrisons, spread like wildfire over the country and created an enormous impression. The arrival of the 'sign from the skies' which the patriots had been demanding from the emperor for the past year seems to have been the turning-point of the Gojjam campaign. In the middle of December the rest of the mission who had been left behind in Sarako in August rejoined Sandford's headquarters. Their enforced stay in Sarako had not been without excitement; they had played a most useful part in assisting the local chiefs to besiege the Italian garrison of Qwara. Their arrival at Sarako at a critical moment was opportune.

It soon became apparent that the enemy was thoroughly alarmed at the situation. General Nasi came to Addis Ababa to study

<sup>1</sup> The late Major-General Orde Wingate, who won fame in the Burma campaign.—ED.

matters for himself and to try to pull things together. Desertions from the Italian native troops had commenced on a large scale and were undoubtedly the cause of his greatest uneasiness. He announced an increase of pay for the soldiers and gave gifts of money and decorations to the 'Banda'<sup>1</sup> leaders, and finally, as a last throw, brought Ras Hailu from Addis Ababa and appointed him governor of Gojjam. He must have known that this was a dangerous move. Hailu had been feudal lord of Gojjam until 1933, when he was removed for misrule and oppression, and he had been a double-crosser all his life. He still had great influence with his people and his arrival in Gojjam early in December, backed by his own and Italian propaganda, undoubtedly had great local effect. He wrote to nearly every chief in Gojjam and many of the smaller leaders made submission to the Italians. The chief patriot leaders in Gojjam were greatly disturbed by all this and wrote letters pressing Sandford to take action. Sandford lost no time in getting a letter through to Hailu, who was an old acquaintance of his, but received no reply. The Italian command backed up their propaganda by more direct methods also, and a series of raids were organized from Buré and Dangila on the surrounding country. The situation in Gojjam seemed shaky; but Sandford was confident that the general position of the Italians was fundamentally unsound. Desertions were continuing steadily and the morale of the native troops was thoroughly bad. The bombing of the forts by the R.A.F. and the constant harassing of convoys and patrols by the patriots were having their effect.

On 17th December Sandford signalled Khartoum that, though the local situation seemed critical, he was convinced that the boldest measures could be taken and might end in the campaign being successfully over by the rains. Nagash and Mangasha were urged not only to make raids in their turn on the Italian fortresses; especially Buré and Dangila, but also to set about clearing the whole foreground along the escarpment from Alifa to the Blue Nile to facilitate the passage of our convoys, which could be expected shortly from the Sudan. In early January, Sandford himself went into the area west and south-west of Buré to look for a landing-ground and to examine the possibilities of making that an advance base and the first headquarters of the emperor. His arrival in the area synchronized with a raid in force by the Buré garrison; and he had an exciting week before a dangerous situation was restored.

On 21st January 1941 Sandford received information that the

<sup>1</sup>Banda was the name given to all native levies in the Italian army.

emperor was approaching Mount Belaia and that he was to meet him there. On his way down Sandford passed within five miles of Dangila and made up his mind that the Italians were about to quit that place. They did so on 16th February. It was hoped that troops might be rushed up in time to block the Italian retreat, but this could not be done in time.

Whilst at Belaia, Sandford received instructions to hand over the command of the mission to Major Wingate, promoted colonel, and to take over the duties of principal military and political adviser to the emperor. Wingate, with Colonel Boustead commanding the frontier battalion, pressed on along the road to the east and gave the Italian forces no peace until they had evacuated Debra Markos and slipped away over the Blue Nile. The audacity of a force seldom numbering more than six hundred men hanging on to an army ten to fifteen times their size was amazing. Whilst the enemy force was retreating from Buré and Debra Markos, Wingate, with only camel transport and a few ramshackle lorries, captured from the enemy, could do no more than harry their rear. Before the enemy evacuated Buré, Wingate had succeeded in placing part of his force on the road between Buré and Debra Markos, and in getting out, the enemy burst through them. There was a memorable fight at Dembecha, where the 2nd Ethiopian battalion fought a soldiers' battle for two hours, inflicting severe casualties on the enemy before they were brushed out of the way. After the enemy had reached Debra Markos and concentrated his forces there, Wingate placed himself and his small force on their flank to the north of the town and maintained himself there in the most audacious manner for several weeks. By this time the British forces moving against Keren, under General Platt, and advancing up from the south, under General Cunningham, were well on their way, and the Debra Markos garrison decided to quit, before the situation had arisen where there might be no Italian main army to fall back on. Wingate and his men entered Debra Markos on 5th April, and the emperor followed the next day. Ras Hailu played his cards well and remained behind to hand over the town.

On 6th April General Cunningham's forces entered Addis Ababa, and on 10th April, Brigadier Lush, the deputy chief political officer and Sandford's brother-in-law, flew from Addis Ababa to confer with the emperor and Sandford at Debra Markos. Sandford flew back with him the same day, bearing with him the emperor's views on the forthcoming operations. It was now that patriot activities took on a larger aspect. General Cunningham,

after receiving the surrender of Addis Ababa, had sent his troops in the main towards Jimma, in which direction the major part of the Addis Ababa garrison had withdrawn, but the course of events in the north made it imperative that his troops should take part, with General Platt's from the north, in rounding up the enemy's main army, which seemed likely to make its stand on the Amba Alagi massif, the decisive battleground of three previous campaigns. It was necessary, therefore, that the patriot army should help to occupy the attention of the very considerable forces of the enemy in the south-west while Cunningham thinned out his troops in that area in order to provide men for his thrust northwards. It was necessary that patriot forces should assist in this thrust also.

The emperor provided forces in four different areas, first on the great north road, to assist the northern thrust, secondly on the roads leading from the capital to Jimma, thirdly on the Lekemti road west of the capital to hold up any diversion that might be made by General Gazzera commanding the Italian troops in Wallega, and fourthly to round up the Gojjam garrison, which had retreated by the main roads into the difficult country north-west of Addis Ababa. The emperor's preliminary instructions were given to the various leaders while he was still in Gojjam. Ras Ababa Aregai, the great patriot leader who had kept resistance against the Italians simmering ever since the fall of Addis Ababa in 1936, was instructed to send five hundred men immediately to co-operate with the South African forces attacking Dessie, and these men were dispatched by lorry within twenty-four hours of receiving the order and did most useful work during the attack on Dessie. The leadership of the patriot forces converging on Jimma was given to Gherassu Duké, another fighting soldier who had never surrendered to the Italians. Shalaka Mesfin and Azazh Kabada (Sandford's colleague in Gojjam) commanded the patriots against Lekemti. To Ras Kassa the emperor assigned the work of rounding up the Gojjam garrison, in conjunction with such of Wingate's force as could be spared. Wingate himself, as was fitting, commanded the final assault, and thus had the satisfaction of finishing off in person the job he had begun four months earlier.

It will be seen, therefore, that patriot forces played a great part in the whole campaign. Scenes of great enthusiasm heralded the emperor's return to his capital; he entered it at the head of six thousand troops, on 5th May, the anniversary of the entry of Italian troops into Addis Ababa in 1936. Thus five long years of usurpation came to an end.

## XVIII

### THE END OF THE CAMPAIGN

THE fall of Keren on 26th March, the occupation of Addis Ababa by General Cunningham's troops on 6th April, and the entry of the emperor into Debra Marcos on the same day meant that the campaign was won and that the Italian East African Empire was in dissolution.

There remained the rounding up of the enemy forces. These were now split in two. In the north the Duke of Aosta sought to make a stand at Amba Alagi, where with the elements which he took with him from Addis Ababa and which he gathered as he retreated up the northern road, and with the defeated troops from Eritrea, he was able to collect a considerable army. He was given little time, however, to organize a defence as British troops followed hard upon the heels of the retreating enemy from north and south, and after a heavy artillery bombardment Amba Alagi fell to General Platt on the 20th of May.

The clearing up of the situation in the south took longer. The enemy forces were scattered over a very large area and General Cunningham, having detached troops to pursue the Duke of Aosta northwards and to assist in the encirclement of the enemy at Amba Alagi, had very limited means at his disposal for the task of rounding up an enemy in greatly superior force. There was stiff fighting in the region of the chain of lakes which lie along the direct road from Nairobi to Addis Ababa. The enemy was finally dislodged and forced back westwards across the Omo River about the middle of June. A converging movement from the north and east then took place on the town of Jimma, a hundred and fifty miles south-west of Addis Ababa, which was entered by Major-General G. C. Fowkes, commanding the 12th (African) Division and the patriot forces under Fitaurari Gherassu Duké on 21st June.

The only Italian forces now remaining in the field in the south were being concentrated by General Gazzera in the neighbourhood of Dembi Dollo, near the Sudan border, and about two hundred miles west of Addis Ababa. The rains had by this time set in and the movement of regular troops with their mechanized transport became increasingly difficult. Patriot forces pushed out from Jimma westwards and a flying column of regular troops and patriots was sent down the road from Addis Ababa through Lekempti to

make a turning movement from the north. These forces converging on him from the east and north shepherded Gazzera into the arms of a small Belgian force under General Gilliert, who had entered the country from the Sudan at Gambeila. Gazzera's army capitulated to the Belgians on 3rd July.

The whole country was now free of the enemy except in the north-west. Here at Gondar a remnant of the once formidable Italian East African Army held out for six months. It is perhaps truer to say they were allowed to remain unmolested. They were incapable of doing harm, and to undertake operations against them at the height of the rainy season would have entailed an effort out of proportion to the importance of the object to be achieved.

In all these operations the Ethiopian patriot forces bore a useful and indeed an essential part. Even before he left Gojjam the emperor had gained touch with the Shoan leaders Ras Ababa Aregai, who had throughout the Italian occupation kept a force in the field in eastern Shoa, in spite of strenuous efforts made by the Italians to crush him, was ordered to send a portion of his troops northwards to co-operate with the British column which was following up the Duke of Aosta. Fitaurari Gherassu Duké—fierce fighter and perpetual thorn in the flesh of the Italians in the districts just south of the capital—was directed to keep contact with the enemy, who had retreated south-westwards from Addis Ababa and were covering Jimma.

But it was obvious that the emperor's place for political as well as military reasons was in the capital, where he could get the reins of government into his hands and from whence he could most easily direct the movements of the irregular patriot forces who were growing in strength from day to day. There were practical difficulties in the way of an immediate entry into the capital and, moreover, the fear was entertained by the British military authorities that the entry into Addis Ababa of a large patriot army flushed with victory would be the prelude to acts of reprisals or worse against the Italian population of the town. These fears proved groundless. When, after suitable arrangements had been made to relieve and disarm the Italian garrisons of the outlying forts, to replace the Italian police and to confine the Italian civil population of some twenty-five thousand souls in zones of segregation, the emperor made his triumphal entry, the bearing and behaviour of the patriot troops and of the Ethiopians generally were exemplary. As soon as he had entered his capital, the emperor bent all his energies to getting under his control the patriot elements all over

the country and to grouping them loosely under the best-known leaders in such a way as to ensure their being employed to the best possible advantage under the general direction of the British commanders. He spent strenuous days inspecting all the troops he could reach within a hundred and fifty miles of the capital. Ras Siyum's Tigréan army, with some detachments of Ras Ababa's troops, supported General Platt's forces in the investment of and attack on Amba Alagi. Ras Biru's Begemدارis captured Debra Tabor and cleared the country east of Lake Tsana of the enemy. Ras Kassa's Shoans assisted Wingate in the final round-up of the Gojjam garrisons at Derra, eighty miles north of Addis Ababa.

In the stiff fighting which cleared the enemy out of the region of the south and west, the patriot forces fording the Ghibbe River in small parallel columns participated in a drive along a front of a hundred and seventy miles, stretching from the lakes to the Lekemti road which runs due west from the capital. Amharas, Gallas, and guragis, under their own *balabats*,<sup>1</sup> were fighting side by side. The emperor himself was present under fire at the forcing of the passage of the Ghibbe where it is crossed by the Lekemti road. Two of his most faithful followers—Azazh Kabada who had been with Sandford in Gojjam, and Shalaka Mesfin who had escorted the emperor as far as the capital—were in command of the forces which captured Goré and Ghimbi, and so closed the ring round Gazzera at Dembi Dollo.

During the four months, April to July, the emperor must have had some thirty thousand men operating under his orders, not counting the Gojjam patriots whom he left to garrison their own province or the army of Ras Siyum which was operating too far away in the north for him to exercise control over it. The calling into being of such a considerable army in so short a time was evidence of the fighting spirit of the Ethiopians, and of their joyful allegiance to the emperor and ready acceptance of his authority.

The reduction of the Gondar garrison took place in due course in January 1942. Patriot forces to the number of ten thousand closed in on the town from all sides; and the *coup de grâce* was given by General Fowkes and the 12th Division. The Crown Prince Asfa Wassen was present, representing the emperor.

A tribute is due to the small and intrepid band of young British officers—there was a Belgian, too—who were lent to the patriot forces as staff officers. They were intensely proud of their men, and their men were proud of them.

<sup>1</sup> Local chiefs.

## XIX

### RECONSTRUCTION

At the moment of writing this last chapter more than three years have passed since the emperor re-entered his capital. It is possible, therefore, to appraise already the progress which has been made towards restoring peace, prosperity, and happiness to the stricken country which he found on his return.

In these cataclysmic times memories tend to become short, and it is hard to remember how formidable the task which appeared confronted him. There was no part of the country which had not been visited by the war in the six months preceding his entry, and many districts had been ravaged over and over again during the previous six years. Shattered buildings, broken bridges, and abandoned transport met the eye wherever one went. The country was full of rifles, machine-guns, and bombs captured from, or flung away by, the fleeing enemy. These weapons were by no means all in the hands of the peaceful peasantry desiring nothing better than to get back to their ploughing. They were largely in the hands of disbanded soldiers of the Italian native army, or of patriot guerrillas, who after years of outlawry would require time and opportunity to become absorbed again as members of a peaceful community. These unruly, or at least unsettled, elements of the population had to live, and they were in fact 'living on the country.' The Italian administrative machinery had of course disappeared. Means of communication had been dislocated and the roads were dangerous in more senses than one. Trade was dead, and in many districts there was a shortage of the necessities of life—of salt, of clothing and, in large areas, even of food.

The progress made in the first nine months was astonishing. In general the whole country was quiet and there were few districts in which normal life had not returned. Roads, with some exceptions, were safe, and the country markets were thronged. The roads and tracks leading to the capital again resounded to the shouts of the muleteers bringing in their loads of hides and skins, coffee, wax, and grain. Governors and judges had been appointed to all provinces and districts. The distribution of these posts had not been a simple matter: many of the old and well-tried men had disappeared in the turmoil of the past six years, and it had not

been easy to find others to replace them. Neither rank nor merit could be the sole password to office. There were patriot leaders to be justly rewarded for past services, and the fighting soldier is not necessarily the best administrator. There were also families and personalities to be favoured or propitiated.

But obviously all this could not be achieved by the waving of a wand, and pending the time when the emperor could get all the threads back into his own hands, some rough and ready machinery had to be devised for preserving law and order and maintaining essential services. The problem was complicated by the presence in the country of an Italian civilian population numbering some forty thousand, who had to be protected, fed, and medically cared for. All these services had to be improvised at top speed. The machinery introduced was the Occupied Enemy Territory Administration—a singularly ill-chosen name in the case of Ethiopia—which was controlled by the political branch of the military command headquarters at Nairobi. The taking over of large townships like Addis Ababa, Harrar, Dessie, Dire Dawa, and Jimma; the organization of the police, the courts, and essential services; the maintenance of the roads, railways, and communications generally; the organization of transport to bring essential supplies—these were no light tasks, and that they were successfully accomplished was a feather in the cap of a very hard-worked staff.

But the difficulties inherent in any system of dual control made it imperative not to prolong the life of the British administration for longer than necessary. For dual control it was from the start. It was to the emperor, from the moment he entered his capital, that the people looked for orders and for justice, and not to any foreigner—friend, benefactor, or comrade-in-arms though he might be. It was a matter of satisfaction therefore to all parties when the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement, which provided for the re-establishment of the Ethiopian Government administration, was signed at Addis Ababa on 31st January 1942.

This agreement was a working arrangement providing for collaboration and mutual assistance between two allies during the period which must elapse before world peace was restored. It was also a great deal more than this, for it made clear that the British Government would abide strictly by the terms of their declaration made through the mouth of Mr. Eden on 4th February 1941, before British troops entered the country: 'His Majesty would welcome the reappearance of an independent Ethiopian State and will recognize the claim of the Emperor Hailé Selassie to the throne.'

The emperor has intimated to His Majesty's Government that he will need outside assistance and guidance. His Majesty's Government agree with this view and consider that any such assistance and guidance in economic and political matters should be the subject of international agreement at the conclusion of peace. They reaffirm that they have themselves no territorial ambitions in Abyssinia.<sup>1</sup>

There has been a good deal of ill-informed criticism of this agreement and of the military convention which accompanied it. It is forgotten that these agreements were never intended to have more than temporary force to tide over a phase of restoring order out of disorder. It was impossible at that stage to be precise about the shape of things to come. The two Governments wisely confined themselves to making practical arrangements for the immediate future. The immediate objects they had in view were to safeguard Allied military interests pending the expulsion of the enemy from Africa; to secure the safe removal from Ethiopia of all Italian prisoners of war and of all but a small proportion of the Italian civil population; to provide a judicial system which could be satisfactorily applied to both foreigners and Ethiopians; and to supply the emperor with assistance, financial and otherwise, to enable him to re-establish his administration. That all these objects were achieved so quickly that the agreements outwore their usefulness even before the minimum period (two years) of their currency had elapsed are causes, not, surely, for criticism, but for congratulation, and are a proof that the confidence of the British Government in the Emperor Hailé Selassié was not misplaced.

It should not be forgotten that when the agreement and military convention were signed Jibuti was still held for the Vichy Government and was under blockade by Allied forces, and that the critical days of the invasion of Egypt by Rommel in July-August 1942 were still to come. It seemed reasonable then that pending the raising and organization of an army by the emperor, the vital Allied communications which passed through the Ethiopian Empire should be secured by British troops, and that special powers and responsibilities should be conferred upon the Allied Commander-in-Chief in certain areas. Happily for all, the conditions which necessitated these arrangements are a thing of the past: Africa is purged and free.

The evacuation of prisoners of war and of the Italian civil population was a big undertaking, which taxed the security, transport, supply, medical, and other military and administrative services to the utmost. The rate of progress was conditioned by the shipping

which could be made available, which was strictly limited. Conditions were not made easier by extremes of heat and cold between the Ethiopian plateau and the Somali desert which the evacuees had to cross, and by the fact that, French Somaliland being closed, the last two-hundred-mile stage of the journey had to be done by lorry, over a rough track to the scarcely adequate port of Berbera in British Somaliland. All that remain in Ethiopia now of the swarms of Italians who came or were sent there to seek their fortunes are a few hundreds of professional men and technicians, who are required to maintain essential services, and who, owing to the exigencies of war, could not be easily replaced by others. These men have been allowed to retain their families and are otherwise well treated, and seem likely to stay on as a contented community in the permanent population of the country.

The agreement boldly cut the country free once and for all from the shackles of capitulations in any form. The old special court, a species of mixed tribunal, which had existed prior to the Italian occupation for the trial of cases in which foreigners were involved, was not allowed to reappear. Foreigners were to be given no privileges in law. On the other hand, the emperor pledged himself to a drastic reorganization of the judicial system, which should bring it into line with modern ideas and practice; and this pledge he has fully implemented. A simple but comprehensive system of courts has been created, comprising communal and regional courts, provincial courts, a high court, and a supreme court. The emperor appointed a British judge of experience to be president of the high court, and several other British judges to serve on the panel of the court. For the present any person who is a party to any proceedings, civil or criminal, within the jurisdiction of a regional, communal, or provincial court, may elect to have his case transferred without additional fee or charge to the high court for trial. The supreme court consists of the Afa Negus (Ethiopian Lord Chief Justice), and two judges of the high court nominated by the president of the high court. The prestige of the new high court has steadily grown. It was of course at first nearly overwhelmed by the amount of criminal business awaiting it, but it has now worked through the arrears and is abreast of this work. As confidence grows in the court and the economic life of the country revives, the number, already large, of civil suits brought to the court will no doubt greatly increase, and this may entail an addition to the number of judges with the requisite qualifications and experience to deal with them. The high court has gone on circuit in all the

provinces of the empire; and it is hoped that visits to each province twice annually will now be the rule. This reorganization of the judiciary carried through by three capable and energetic ministers of justice in succession—Blatta Ayela Gabré, now Ethiopian minister in London, Dr. Ambai, Vice-Minister, who was acting Minister of Justice for a year, and Afa Mesfin Andargai, the present Minister of Foreign Affairs—is perhaps the most satisfactory piece of constructive work so far accomplished.

The emperor's administration has been re-established. It was only once seriously challenged—namely by malcontents in the Tigré province in the autumn of 1943. When we reflect on the size of the empire, the diversity of the elements of which it is composed, and the state of chaos in which the emperor found it on his return, we can not only pay a tribute to his patience, skill, and sympathy in carrying out his task, but also safely affirm that he succeeded because his people believed in him, trusted him, and wished him—and no one else—to succeed.

The first thing to attain was internal security, and it was for this reason that the British Government engaged themselves in the military convention to assist in raising, organizing, and training a regular army. To supervise this task they provided at their own cost a military mission which has now spent two and a half years in the country, and whose enthusiastic and competent head for the past year and a half has been Major-General A. E. Cottam. This army now consists of eleven battalions, two field batteries of artillery, and various ancillary services, British officers for the present being in command of all the units. A very efficient military training school is fast turning out competent Ethiopian officers, and it is expected that before long they will assume direct command, and that British officers will act in an advisory capacity only. The men of the new regular army soon had occasion to show their military spirit and sound discipline in the Tigré operations of 1943 referred to above, and on other occasions. They are a serviceable spear-head; but their numbers are insufficient and their equipment still leaves much to be desired. They are at present backed by a territorial army of over thirty battalions; but difficulties of training and equipment have made it hard to weld these into a satisfactory force. It is understood that the Government's policy is to increase the size of the regular army, as opportunity occurs, at the expense of the territorial army, which force will be incorporated into the regular army and may eventually disappear. The emperor maintains his own bodyguard, some three thousand strong, a smart

and well-equipped brigade, which he holds in readiness to use on emergency as and when required.

The policing of such a vast area as the Ethiopian empire, with its varying conditions of mountain and desert, is a most formidable task. Each provincial governor has raised his own local police, with whom, all things considered, he performs wonders; but it is the intention of the Government to replace them with regular police centrally administered. The regular Ethiopian police, commanded by a British commissioner and assisted by four British police officers, already numbers 2,340. It has taken over the policing of the capital and also of the provincial towns of Harrar, Dessie, and Jimma; and by its smartness and efficiency it is rapidly gaining the confidence of the population. It has also taken over, with outstanding success, the policing of the border district of Borana on the Kenya frontier, an area with a bad reputation for tribal raiding.

The provincial governors of to-day are not the old feudal lords of the past. They receive fixed salaries, and their powers and responsibilities are carefully defined by law. The administration of the country is centralized through ministers responsible to the emperor; and the emperor rules constitutionally in accordance with the terms of the constitution which he granted voluntarily to his people on 16th July 1931. The council of ministers is at present a very hard-worked body and the emperor takes no action without consulting them. The *Negarit Gazeta*, or *Official Gazette*, in which the new laws are promulgated is a monument to their labours; seventy laws, many of them of primary importance, having appeared in the first two and a half years of the Government's existence. British advisers were appointed by the emperor to most of the ministries early in 1942.

In most of the government departments considerable progress can be recorded, though in every case they have been hampered by lack of trained staff and shortage of funds.

Next in importance perhaps to public security has been education. During the Italian occupation practically nothing was done in regard to the education of the native population. The excellent Emperor Menelik and Tafari Makonnen Schools for boys, and the Empress Memen School for girls in Addis Ababa were closed. Many of the educated young men had been hunted down and killed. The work of years was destroyed; and if it were not that a considerable number of boys and girls and of young men and women had received some sort of education in exile, all would be to do again. Now in Addis Ababa the Tafari Makonnen School

is open as an elementary school with nearly 1,000 boys; the Empress Menen School has between 200 and 300 girls; the old Menelik School, now renamed the Asfao Wasan School after the crown prince, houses 150 orphans, there are 180 boys in a school for the sons of patriots, and another 180 in the Balabat school for the sons of chiefs. In the summer of 1943 the emperor opened the Hailé Selassié Secondary School in an excellent building a few miles outside the town, erected by the Italians as an agricultural school and experimental station. In addition to all this there is a large technical school for training mechanics and artisans, and a small arts and crafts school where village industries are taught. In the provinces over seventy schools have been started with such staff as could be collected; and a community centre has been inaugurated at Debra Birhan in the Shoa province, designed as an experiment in mass adult education. Mention must be made, too, of a new departure fraught with great hope for the future of the Church, the Ordinands' College in Addis Ababa for the training of men intended for the ministry. Altogether some forty foreigners are employed on educational work—British, Americans, and Egyptians—but a great many more are needed. In general the Ministry of Education suffers more than other ministries from lack of staff, money, and equipment, but it is finding its feet, and shortly will have gained enough experience and knowledge of the problems involved to formulate a policy and lay down a programme.

Medical services also are being organized and with the notable assistance of a Friends' Ambulance Unit, clinics and a few provincial hospitals have been established in many parts of the country. In Addis Ababa itself there are four hospitals open, one of which is staffed and supported by British Red Cross funds.<sup>1</sup> The need of Ethiopian personnel for dressers, nurses, and doctors is urgent, and it is one object of the plans now afoot to provide the training needed for this purpose.

In the field of commerce—to quote an official report—"it is a remarkable thing that in spite of all difficulties, so much has been achieved." "Ordered government had to be created, smashed communications to be reopened, essential services maintained, and the stream of internal and external commerce to be undammed. Somehow this has been done, and the commerce of the empire, starting again from the small beginnings made in the few months of the British occupation after the Italian defeat, has already reached higher levels than any known before the Italian occupation. The

<sup>1</sup> Closed December 1944.

war has rather helped than hindered the process, in so far that it has created a lucrative market for Ethiopian cereals which had never previously been exported in any quantities. This new trade has compensated largely for the still restricted exports of coffee, hides and skins.

'As a concrete example, it might be noted that the export and import traffic carried by the Franco-Ethiopian Railway before 1936 averaged annually from 50,000 to 60,000 tons. During the Italian occupation it rose to a peak of 95,612 tons in 1937. In 1943, the first year it was reopened after the blockade of Jibuti, it amounted to 98,466 tons. The current year (1944) shows slightly under 40,000 tons for the first four months.'

The report goes on to mention factors which have conducted to an increase in the volume of external trade and which should lead to a still greater development in the future, when the war conditions which impose so many restrictions are a thing of the past, such as the road system constructed by the Italians and the consequent introduction of mechanical transport, both of which have speeded up the exchange of goods between the capital and the interior, and the higher standard of living which has already created a wider field for imports than ever before.

It is true that smashed communications have been reopened, but what has been done cannot be described as more than patchwork. To rebuild the broken bridges and to recondition roadways which were subjected to the strain of heavy war traffic before their newly made foundations had settled into place has been up to now beyond the resources of the Ethiopian Government. In the interests of security, of efficient administration, and the full development of the economic life of the country, the task must be undertaken somehow in the near future.

The Ethiopian Government can well claim that they have not been backward in putting their house in order within their means, and in relation to conditions as they found them. The Ministry of Finance deserves no small credit for having steered a steady course through an ill-marked channel. It was to be expected that the advisers would press strongly from the start for the framing of a budget. The Chamber of Deputies supported the view of the advisers, and went so far as to throw out a money bill on the grounds that the Government were acting unconstitutionally in view of the failure of the Minister of Finance to submit a budget for their approval, as laid down in Article 55 of the Constitution.

The Government, however, refused to be rushed; and it must

be admitted that there was much to be said for their hesitation to commit themselves. Financially everything was in flux. The country's needs could not be clearly foreseen, and even if they could have been, rapidly rising prices made estimates a gamble. Revenue was even more difficult to calculate. Data were lacking upon which to base an equitable scale of taxation. The machinery of tax collection had to be reconstructed—very much a matter of trial and error in view of varying conditions throughout the empire and the shortage of suitable staff. The value even of the British subsidy was an uncertain factor, owing to the unexpected unpinning of the Maria Theresa dollar exchange by the British Government in September 1942.

Prior to that moment, and when the Anglo-Ethiopian Agreement was signed in January 1942, the rate of exchange of the M.T. dollar and the pound had been fixed at \$10.66 to 20 East African shillings, which are equivalent to £1 sterling. After September 1942 the rate of exchange varied locally with the fluctuating supply of, and demand for, either of the two currencies. It was influenced by the rise of the price of silver in the free markets of the world, and in internal markets the M.T. dollar has usually been worth about three shillings in recent years. In other words, the value of the British subsidy to the Ethiopian Government has diminished, since the date of the agreement, by nearly one-third; for rising prices had to be followed by increases of salaries after not too long an interval.

In view of all these uncertainties it is not surprising that the Council of Ministers, although they reached the point of agreeing on a provisional budget in two successive years, have in the end refused to commit themselves by submitting it to Parliament. Instead, they decided upon the cautious, but unsatisfactory, policy of making only quarterly allocations of funds to the various ministries. This system, of course, makes it difficult for ministries to plan ahead, and therefore impedes the building up of confidence among the lower ranks of the administration; so it is satisfactory to be able to record that a budget for the year ending 5th September 1945 (the end of the Ethiopian calendar year) was eventually prepared, sanctioned, and published in the official gazette,<sup>1</sup> and that it shows a balance of revenue over expenditure without any financial aid from Britain.

The Ministry of Finance can at least claim that their expenditure

<sup>1</sup> *Negarit Gazeta*, vol. iv, no. 4, dated 30th December 1944. The estimated total revenue was M.T. dollars 38,072,000, and the total expenditure M.T. dollars 37,942,556.

has never yet exceeded their liquid resources and that they still have a balance in hand, if not a large one. Meanwhile they have not been idle. The organization of the ministry itself is admitted by everybody to be efficient. Their provincial staff is improving. Valuable experience has been gained and data collected, and fiscal legislation based on these has been growing, a noteworthy example being the improved method of assessing the land tax.

Enough has been said to show that the four years following the restoration were fruitful years. Everybody in touch with the situation is confident that the next few years will prove to be even more fruitful, especially since the relations between the Ethiopian Government and the Government of the United Kingdom were placed on a new footing by the signature, on 19th December 1944, of a new agreement between the two governments.

This differs from its predecessor in one striking respect. The 1942 agreement accorded a pre-eminent position to the British Government as regards diplomatic precedence, appointment of advisers, management of the currency, and other functions of the Ethiopian administration. In the new agreement all that is swept away: it reads as a treaty between two equal and independent powers, referred to as 'the High Contracting Parties,' and the engagements, in every respect except one, are mutual. The exception is the article in which the Ethiopian Government agree that the reserved area and the territory known as the Ogaden shall continue under British military administration. These territories bordering on French and British Somalilands and the late Italian colony of Somalia are inhabited principally by nomadic tribes of Somalis, given to occasional fights between tribes' and raids across the frontier. It was hoped by the Ethiopian Government and people that the British Government would agree to withdraw from the administration of these extensive territories, which include the commercial town of Jigjiga, for there are many inconveniences in having so large a part of Ethiopian territory under a different legal and judicial system, and with differences in currency, and in other respects. The continued separation of these territories was only agreed to for so long a period as the two years for which the agreement will continue in force, because retention under British administration was regarded as a contribution to the effective prosecution of the war.

In other matters the British Government has gone a long way to meet the Ethiopians. The railway is to be handed over to the Ethiopian Government to be worked on its behalf under the direc-

tion of an American technical staff. The British military mission is to be considerably expanded to train the whole Ethiopian army, the expenses of the mission being borne by the British Government; and full provision is made for civil and military aircraft of each of the high contracting parties to fly over the territories and to use the landing-grounds of the other party. An annexe deals in detail with the status and privileges of the members of the British military mission, and is followed by a series of letters exchanged between Lord De La Warr and the Ethiopian Prime Minister, which are concerned mainly with details relating to the administration of the reserved area and the Ogaden. The last clause provides that the agreement shall remain in force until it is replaced by a treaty between the parties, unless, at any time after two years from the date of signature, either of the parties has given three months' notice to terminate it.

No financial aid is provided for in the agreement, because an estimate of future budget requirements showed that Ethiopia would probably be able to pay her own way.

*If we try to simplify the outlook we may say that there are a short-term and a long-term problem facing the Ethiopian Government. The short-term problem is to set right the devastation caused by the war of liberation, and to provide the country, on a balanced budget, with what may be termed ordinary good government. The long-term problem—it is really a whole series of related problems—is so to build up and develop the body politic, economic, and social, of Ethiopia that freedom from want and from fear and a higher standard of living shall be secured for all her peoples.*

It was the intention of the Government of the United Kingdom, we believe, to provide the Ethiopian Government with the assistance necessary to achieve the short-term goal. They have done much and the end of the task is in sight. It would be altogether appropriate that they should complete the work.

The Ethiopian Government will still need help in solving the long-term problems, which cannot be exactly defined at the present stage. A great deal of investigation and research will be required first; and it is generally agreed that the aid of foreign experts will be needed to make a thorough examination of the questions involved. A beginning has been made by an American technical mission, generously provided by the Government of the United States, which spent six months in the country studying many of these questions. On the basis of the necessary surveys, plans for the economic development of the country could and should be

prepared. The extent of the problem could then be exactly defined and the means of carrying out the essential plans could then be negotiated. The task of carrying out the necessary development and reforms is one that will need a great and sustained effort; but it is one that, if the pronouncements of the spokesmen of the United Nations mean anything, the peoples of backward countries are justified in hoping they will be encouraged and assisted to undertake. Ethiopia is to be congratulated on having a sovereign whose highest ambition and constant effort is the improvement of his administration and the furtherance of his people's welfare.

## APPENDIX I

### EXTRACT FROM THE CONSTITUTION OF ETHIOPIA

#### DECREE

We, Hailé Selassié I, Emperor of Ethiopia, having been called to the Empire by the Grace of God and by the unanimous voice of the people, and having received the Crown and the Throne legitimately by anointment according to law, are convinced that there is no better way of manifesting the gratitude which We owe to Our Creator, Who has chosen Us and granted Us His confidence, than to render Ourselves worthy of it by making every effort so that he who comes after Us may be invested with this confidence and may work in conformity with the laws according to the principles established.

Having in view the prosperity of the country, We have decided to draw up a Constitution which safeguards such prosperity based on the laws and We have the hope that this Constitution will be a source of well-being for Ethiopia, that it will contribute to the maintenance of Our Government and to the happiness and prosperity of Our well beloved people, and that it will give satisfaction to all. Having expressed and made clear Our Will, We have accordingly decided to grant this Constitution.

The Constitution which is to serve as the basis, in the future, for the maintenance of the Ethiopian Government and of the laws which are based on it, and the means of applying such laws once resolved on, will itself set forth the necessity of the measures suitable for ensuring its maintenance in order that this Constitution of Our State may remain perpetual and immutable.

Since our accession to the Imperial Throne of Ethiopia, having received from the hands of God a high mission for the accomplishment of His destinies, We consider that it is Our duty to decree and enforce all the measures necessary for the maintenance of Our Government for increasing the well-being of Our People and aiding their progress on the road to happiness and the civilization attained by independent and cultured nations.

We consider that the way to achieve this aim lies in the elaboration of the present Constitution, which will facilitate Government action whilst assuring the happiness of the people who will, in addition, derive from it an honour which will not fail to be reflected on future generations and will permit the Empire to enjoy the inestimable benefits of peace and security.

Animated by this noble desire, and in order to enable Our State and Our people to obtain a high place in History, We have, after Our elevation to the Imperial Throne, and in the second year of Our Reign, in the Year of Grace 1923 (A.D. 1931), unasked and of Our own free will, decreed the present State Constitution.

## CONSTITUTION OF ETHIOPIA

*Established in the Reign of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I,  
the 16th day of July 1931*

### CHAPTER I

#### THE ETHIOPIAN EMPIRE AND THE SUCCESSION TO THE THRONE

*Art. 1.* The territory of Ethiopia, in its entirety, is from one end to the other, subject to the Government of His Majesty the Emperor.

All the natives of Ethiopia, subjects of the Empire, form together the Ethiopian Nation.

*Art. 2.* The Imperial Government assures the union of the territory, of the nation and of the law of Ethiopia.

*Art. 3.* The Law determines that the Imperial dignity shall remain perpetually attached to the line of His Majesty Haile Selassie I, descendant of King Sahlé Selassié, whose line descends without interruption from the dynasty of Menelik I, son of King Solomon of Jerusalem and of the Queen of Ethiopia, known as the Queen of Sheba.

*Art. 4.* The Throne and the Crown of the Empire shall be transmitted to the descendants of the Emperor pursuant to the Law of the Imperial House.

*Art. 5.* By virtue of His Imperial Blood, as well as by the anointing which He has received, the person of the Emperor is sacred, His dignity is inviolable and His power indisputable. Consequently, He is entitled to all the honours due to Him in accordance with tradition and the present Constitution. The Law decrees that any one so bold as to injure the Majesty of the Emperor will be punished.

### CHAPTER II

#### THE POWER AND PREROGATIVES OF THE EMPEROR

*Art. 6.* In the Ethiopian Empire supreme power rests in the hands of the Emperor. He ensures the exercise thereof in conformity with the established law.

*Art. 7.* The Emperor of Ethiopia will institute the Chamber of the Senate (*Taheg Mawossena Meker-Beth*) and the Chamber of Deputies

(*Yaheg Mamria Meker-Beth*). The laws prepared by these Chambers become executory by His promulgation.

*Art. 8.* It is the Emperor's right to convene the deliberative Chambers and to declare the opening and the close of their sessions. He may also order their convocation before or after the usual time.

He may dissolve the Chamber of Deputies.

*Art. 9.* When the Chambers are not sitting, the Emperor has the right, in case of necessity, in order to maintain order and avert public dangers, to promulgate decrees taking the place of laws. The Law determines that these decrees shall in due course be presented to the Chambers at their first subsequent meeting, and that they shall be abrogated for the future if the Chambers do not approve them.

*Art. 10.* The Emperor shall give the necessary orders to ensure the execution of the laws in force, according to the letter and the spirit thereof, and for the maintenance of public order and the development of the prosperity of the nation.

*Art. 11.* The Emperor shall lay down the organization and the regulations of all administrative departments.

It is His right also to appoint and dismiss the officers of the Army, as well as civil officials, and to decide as to their respective charges and salaries.

*Art. 12.* The right of declaring war and of concluding peace is legally reserved to the Emperor.

*Art. 13.* It is the Emperor's right to determine the armed forces necessary to the Empire, both in time of peace and in time of war.

*Art. 14.* The Emperor has legally the right to negotiate and to sign all kinds of treaties.

*Art. 15.* The Emperor has the right to confer the title of Prince and other honorific titles, to establish personal estates (*reste-guelt*) and to institute new Orders.

*Art. 16.* The Emperor has the right to grant pardon, to commute penalties and to reinstate.

*Art. 17.* If the Emperor is incapable, either owing to age or sickness, of dealing with the affairs of Government, a Regent of the Empire may be appointed, pursuant to the Law of the Imperial House, in order to exercise the supreme power on the Emperor's behalf.

### CHAPTER III

#### THE RIGHTS RECOGNIZED BY THE EMPEROR AS BELONGING TO THE NATION, AND THE DUTIES INCUMBENT ON THE NATION

*Art. 18.* The Law specifies the conditions required for the status of Ethiopian subjects.

*Art. 19.* All Ethiopian subjects, provided that they comply with the conditions laid down by law and the decrees promulgated by

H.M. the Emperor, may be appointed officers of the Army or civil officials, or to any other posts or offices in the service of the State.

*Art. 20.* All those who belong to the Ethiopian Army owe absolute loyalty and obedience to the Emperor, in conformity with the provisions of the Law.

*Art. 21.* The nation is bound to pay legal taxes.

*Art. 22.* Within the limits provided by law, Ethiopian subjects have the right to pass freely from one place to another.

*Art. 23.* No Ethiopian subject may be arrested, sentenced or imprisoned except in pursuance of the law.

*Art. 24.* No Ethiopian subject may, against his will, be deprived of the right to have his case tried by the legally established Court.

*Art. 25.* Except in the cases provided by law, no domiciliary searches may be made.

*Art. 26.* Except in the cases provided by law, no one shall have the right to violate the secrecy of the correspondence of Ethiopian subjects.

*Art. 27.* Except in cases of public utility determined by law, no one shall be entitled to deprive an Ethiopian subject of movable or landed property which he holds.

*Art. 28.* All Ethiopian subjects have the right to present petitions to the Government in legal form.

*Art. 29.* The provisions of the present Chapter shall in no way limit the measures which the Emperor, by virtue of his supreme power, may take in the event of war or of public misfortunes menacing the interests of the nation.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DELIBERATIVE CHAMBERS OF THE EMPIRE

*Art. 30.* The Deliberative Chambers of the Empire are the two following:

(a) the First: Chamber of the Senate (*Yaheg Mawossena Meker-Beth*).

(b) the Second: Chamber of Deputies (*Yaheg Mamria Meker-Beth*).

*Art. 31.* The members of the Senate shall be appointed by His Majesty the Emperor from among the Nobility (*Mekuanent*) who have for a long time served his Empire as Princes or Ministers, Judges or high military officers.

*Art. 32.* Temporarily, and until the people are in a position to elect them themselves, the members of the Chamber of Deputies shall be chosen by the Nobility (*Makuanent*) and the local Chiefs (*Shumoch*).

*Articles 33 to 47* prescribe the principal rules for the conduct of the business of the two Chambers.

The remaining chapters are as follows:

## CHAPTER V

## THE MINISTERS OF THE EMPIRE

## CHAPTER VI

## JURISDICTION

## CHAPTER VII

## BUDGET OF THE IMPERIAL GOVERNMENT

## APPENDIX II

LAW PASSED FOR THE LIBERATION AND PROTECTION  
OF SLAVES ON 31ST MARCH 1924

We have already promulgated laws forbidding the traffic in slaves. Now, as it is our desire to do all in our power to place the protection and freedom of slaves on a sound basis, we have decreed this Law:

1. As the immediate liberation of all the slaves who lived with their masters before the Law<sup>1</sup> would result in their being thieves, robbers and vagabonds to the detriment of the nation, they shall remain with their masters.

2. If it be found that slaves bought before the Law have been ill-treated with respect to their clothing, food and general condition, and if the Judges appointed for the purpose, after having looked into the matter, find it to be true, they shall summon the masters, warn them not to ill-treat the slaves in clothing, food and their general condition and take surety. But if the masters be found ill-treating the slaves a second time the slaves shall be free.

3. If the masters, mistresses or children of the masters of slaves become god-parents to slaves bought before the Law, they shall not be entitled to hold them in slavery any longer and the slaves shall be free.

4. If the masters of slaves bought before the Law educate their slaves and make them priests, deacons or military officers, they are no longer entitled to hold them in slavery and the slaves shall be free.

5. If the masters or the children of the masters of slaves bought before the Law cause the slaves to bear children for them, they shall not be entitled to hold them as slaves and the slaves shall be free.

6. If slaves bought before the Law desert their masters and are

<sup>1</sup>This is a substitute in the Amharic original for the phrase 'before the coming into force of the present law.'

caught while running away at a *kella* (toll-gate) or at the frontier, they shall remain 8 days at the Rest House specially provided by the Government for this purpose. If their masters fail to appear within the 8 days the slaves shall be free and shall in no circumstances be sent back to slavery.

7. If the masters of slaves bought before the Law die without freeing them, the slaves shall remain at the homes of their dead masters for seven years and shall be free at the end of the seven years.

8. Slaves bought before the Law shall serve their masters until such time as when they will obtain their freedom and shall not be given to relatives or other people for a price or without a price. If any slaves be found who have passed from one master to another, they shall be free.

9. When a divorce takes place and the husband and wife are agreed that their slaves were bought with money, the slaves shall be asked as to whether they choose to remain with their master or with their mistress. But if all the slaves choose to remain either with their master or their mistress the husband or wife shall receive the amount spent to buy the slaves and the slaves shall not be forcibly divided like cattle between husband and wife.

10. Slaves who were captured in war before the Law shall obtain their freedom after the death of their masters. They shall not pass to their masters' children.

11. If slaves bought before the Law are found alone at a *kella* (toll-gate) or on the frontier they shall be taken before the magistrates and questioned, but no person except their own masters is entitled to catch them inside the country. And if any man catch and bring them back he shall receive no remuneration for doing so.

12. If masters find their slaves after they have run away from them they shall not take them back before the Judge has inquired into the reason why the slaves had run away. If the masters be found to have taken their slaves back before notifying the Judges they shall be fined.

13. If by permission of the Government or of their masters, slaves bought before the Law become soldiers and go to war to fight the enemy once or twice, they can no longer be called slaves and shall be free.

14. If during their lifetime the masters of slaves bought before the Law free their slaves for their good services, their children shall also be free. The children of these freed slaves are under no obligation to live in slavery after their parents have been freed.

15. All the slaves whom people in the country districts have caused to intermarry and have children before the Law shall be counted by the Governor and the officials appointed for the purpose and entered in a register, and the slaves shall be caused to live in their masters' houses. If any one of the slaves dies, the master shall at once notify the Judges, and his or her name shall be entered in a register. But if

he fail to notify the judge of the death of his slave and to have the fact entered in a register he shall be punished as though he were guilty of slave trading.

16. All the children born of slaves bought before the Law shall be free as from the date of their birth, but they shall remain with their parents in the homes of their masters until they are fifteen, and receive education. As they will be helpless if they be sent away before they are fifteen, their masters shall clothe and feed them until they are of that age.

17. If slaves bought before the Law save their masters' lives in battle or in a great accident, they shall be free.

18. If female slaves bought before the Law bear children for men not in slavery, the children shall be free.

19. If slaves bought before the Law be kept by their mistresses as *melman* (for intimate relationship), they shall be free.

20. Masters who had given their slaves to other persons before the Law are not entitled to claim them again wherever they may find them because they had formerly been their slaves.

#### CONCERNING FREED SLAVES

21. The Judges appointed for the purpose are authorized to give slaves set free under the Law certificates in which their names, districts and races are written, and then hand them over to the Governor against receipts.

22. The certificates to be given to freed slaves shall be written as follows:

*Name:*

*Father's Name:*

*Place of Birth:*

*District:*

*Former Master's Name:*

*Master's Occupation:*

*Master's 'Balderaba' (Patron).*

. . . has been set free and is entitled to live at liberty where he (she) wishes. The reason for his (her) liberation is found written in Register . . . , page . . . , place where he was set free . . . , month . . . , and year . . .

*Official Seal.*

*Judge's Signature.*

*Secretary's Signature.*

23. The Governors are authorized to receive the freed slaves from the Judges and to send them back to their relatives and kindred.

24. Slaves who are freed according to law and returned to their districts are exempt from taxation for seven years until they are able to support themselves.

25. If slaves freed according to law do not desire to return to their districts and to their relatives, they are entitled to earn their living wherever they like after receipt of their Certificate of Freedom.

26. If slaves freed according to law be over the age of seven and under the age of twenty, they are entitled to go to a school especially established by the Government and to learn reading and writing. The Government shall bear their expenses until they complete their course of reading and writing.

27. After the slaves freed according to law have completed their course of reading and writing, the Government will examine them and send to be trained in apprentices' shops those who are good for handicrafts; to military schools those who are good for military training, to schools for foreign studies those who are good for foreign studies; to the Church schools those who are good for the Church.

28. Although it has been said that the Government will send to school slaves freed according to law, it will do so only until they have learned to read and write and until they are twenty. After the age of twenty they shall in no way be forced, to do anything against their will.

29. If slaves freed according to law become educated and capable, they are entitled to enter Government service and obtain responsible positions.

30. If slaves freed according to law be found to be thieves or vagabonds, they shall be punished according to the law set down for the punishment of thieves and vagabonds. But they shall not return to slavery because they have become thieves or vagabonds.

#### PUNISHMENT OF SLAVE-TRADERS

31. If after the Law prohibiting traffic in slaves any person be found selling or buying slaves, he shall be fined 500 dollars and imprisoned for ten years for a first offence. If he has no money, he shall be imprisoned for fifteen years. For a second offence he shall be condemned to imprisonment for life.

32. If any man either by persuasion or by deceit cause a slave freed according to law to return to slavery, he shall be fined 500 dollars and be imprisoned for five years. For a second offence he shall be imprisoned for life.

33. If any man insult slaves freed according to law by calling them slaves he shall be fined 50 dollars as a law breaker.

34. If any slave bought after the Law declare before a Judge, on being caught and examined, the district where he was bought, or if the slave trader on being caught reveal the name of the district from where he bought the slave, the Governor, the *Balabat* (District Squire), and the District Official shall be fined for failing to observe in their district the law forbidding traffic in slaves; the Governor shall be fined 300 dollars, the *Balabat* 200 dollars, and the Official 100 dollars, for a first offence. For a second offence the Governor shall be fined 500 dollars, the *Balabat* 300 dollars and the District Official 200 dollars. On a third offence the Governor shall be dismissed from office, the *Balabat* shall lose his estate and the District Official his appointment.

35. The Judges appointed for the purpose shall send a report on these fines to the Minister of the Interior who shall collect the fines from the Governors, the *Balabats* and the District Officials and hand them over to the Minister of Finance. If the Minister of the Interior fail to collect the fines from the provincial authorities concerned he shall be liable to pay double the amount of the moneys as entered in the register. The Minister of Finance shall put these moneys aside and use them for the clothing, feeding and schooling of freed slaves. They shall not be applied to any other purpose.

36. As any man found trading in slaves must serve his sentence under the custody of the Governor of Prisons, the Judge shall hand him over to the Governor of Prisons against a receipt.

37. When the Judges appointed to facilitate the freedom of slaves send a slave trader to the Governor of Prisons they shall notify him in writing the number of years the prisoner has to serve his sentence, and the year, the month and the day when he shall be released.

#### CONCERNING JUDGES APPOINTED TO SUPERVISE THE LIBERATION OF SLAVES

38. To expedite the liberation of slaves the Government shall appoint two Judges in Addis Ababa and in each of the Provinces. The Judges sitting in Addis Ababa shall be appointed by the Government. Those sitting in the Provinces shall be selected by the Governors and appointed with the approval of the Government.

39. The Judges shall be provided by the Government in Addis Ababa and by the Governors in the Provinces with buildings where they shall hold their courts dealing with slave cases. Rest houses and food for the slaves shall be provided by the Government in Addis Ababa and by the Governors in the Provinces.

40. Guards to look after the slaves shall be provided for the Judges by the Government in Addis Ababa and by the Governors in the

Provinces. If a slave escape before his or her case is over the guards shall be held responsible.

41. If after the case has been examined by the Judges appointed to deal with slave cases, either the masters or the slaves desire to make appeals, in Addis Ababa the matter will not go before the Government Magistrates, but it shall be decided by a commission specially appointed by the Government. In the Provinces the case shall not go before the Provincial Magistrate, but it shall be decided by a commission appointed by the Governor. The Minister of the Interior shall not interfere in the decisions reached by the Judges on slave cases, but he shall supervise that the law established for freeing slaves is properly carried out.

42. Judges appointed to deal with slave cases shall receive an official seal for giving Certificates of Freedom and for summoning defendants. The seal shall be under the care of the Secretary and the Judges shall affix their signatures to it when a document is sealed. If the seal is not accompanied by the signature of a Judge it shall be invalid.

43. The Minister of the Interior shall appoint a Controller who shall examine every six months the work done by Judges appointed to deal with slave cases. The Controller shall send a report of his investigation to the Minister of the Interior who shall immediately place it before the Government.

44. The Judges appointed to deal with slave cases shall send a monthly report to the Minister of the Interior stating the number of slaves freed and a *résumé* of the reasons for their liberation. The Minister of the Interior shall report this to the Government and then it shall be published in the Press.

45. This Decree shall be improved from time to time in the future.

*22nd Megabit, in the year of grace 1916 (31st March 1924).*

ADDIS ABABA.

SUPPLEMENTARY LAW AMENDING THE LAW FOR THE  
LIBERATION OF SLAVES (DATED 15TH JULY 1931)<sup>1</sup>

In pursuance of Article 45 of the Law for the Liberation of Slaves dated the 22nd day of Megabit in the year of grace 1916 (31st March 1924) which provided that the said Law could be amended thereafter according to need, the following provisions are added to it this 8th day of Hamlé in the year of grace 1923 (15th July 1931).

ARTICLE I

The provision of Article 7 is revoked which declared that slaves bought before the publication of the Law for the liberation of slaves whose freedom their masters had not granted by their wills, should be free after an interval of seven years from the death of their masters (during which they would have to remain in the houses of their masters).

The aforesaid Article is amended as follows: namely, that slaves in that category shall be free as from the death of their master. In the case of slaves thus freed from the death of their masters who are liable to account to their masters' heirs for goods or work entrusted to them, they must, however, stay up to one year to perform that obligation before leaving with their certificate of freedom.

We have decreed as follows concerning the conditions of living of those slaves:

(a) If it is a matter of adult slaves capable of working, after having received their certificate of freedom, they will be repatriated by the Governors of the respective provinces and will do work of their choice. (Cf. Arts. 23-4.)

(b) If the slaves in question are too old to work or if they are unfitted to work after having received their certificate of liberation they will be permitted, if they declare their desire to do so, to stay with the children of their former master or mistress, hired at wages, in order that they may not suffer for want of a protector. (cf. Art. 25.)

(c) As for those slaves who would be too small to be repatriated or to earn their living by working, if their family cannot take charge of them, they will be admitted to the special school founded by the Government for that purpose to be brought up there and educated. (Cf. Arts. 26-8.)

(d) Finally, the Registrar of the Court, appointed to supervise the liberation of slaves, shall henceforth forward each year to the Minister of the Interior a report showing the number of adult slaves repatriated as well as of minors admitted to the school.

<sup>1</sup> Translated from the French translation of the Slavery Law of 15th July 1931, in Amharic.

## ARTICLE 2

To the provisions of Article 8, worded as follows:<sup>1</sup>

'Until the day on which slaves bought before the publication of the Slavery Law will be freed, they shall serve their masters exclusively. It is strictly forbidden to assign them for a money consideration or gratuitously to relatives or to third persons. The slaves who may be assigned to others will be freed,' the following is added:

'If slaves bought before the publication of the Slavery Law are assigned to others, both the person assigning and the person to whom the slave is assigned will be punished with the same penalty as a kidnapper of slaves.'

## ARTICLE 3

The provisions of Article 15, worded as follows, are revoked:

'The Judges appointed *ad hoc*, as also the Governors of provinces, must make a census of the slaves and record them in a register by name just as marriages of peasants in the Interior were recorded before the publication of the Slavery Law and must do what is necessary to make them live in the houses of their master. If, among the slaves, one happens to die, their masters must inform the Judges at once so that it may be recorded. If they do not inform the Judges they will be punished with the same penalty as kidnappers of slaves.'

The Article is amended as follows:

'In those provinces where there is reason to suspect that there is a traffic in slaves, a census shall be taken of all the inhabitants, men, women and children, and a record shall be kept of them; both the chief officer of the district and the chief officer of the village as also the censors specially appointed for that work shall subscribe their signatures to the said register which shall be sent to the Governor-General of the province. He, after having deposited a copy in the provincial secretariat, shall send the original to the Ministry of the Interior. Thereafter there shall be a census every five years in order to ascertain the deaths and births in the meanwhile, and the result shall be sent to the Ministry of the Interior in the same manner as the original register.'

## ARTICLE 4

Hereafter the Law for the Liberation of Slaves shall be amended and improved progressively until slavery shall have completely disappeared.

*Addis Ababa, the 18th Hamlie, the year of grace 1923 (15th July 1931).*

<sup>1</sup> It will be noticed that the wording of Article 8 of the Law of 1924 in this translation from the French differs from the wording in the translation from the Amharic which precedes it, though the meaning is the same. It is possible that the law of 1924 was originally drafted in French and somewhat freely translated into Amharic. The wording of Art. 15 is also different.—ED.

A PROCLAMATION TO PROVIDE FOR THE ABOLITION  
OF THE LEGAL STATUS OF SLAVERY AND CERTAIN  
OTHER MATTERS

CONQUERING LION OF THE TRIBE OF JUDAH HAILE SELASSIÉ I  
ELECT OF GOD, EMPEROR OF ETHIOPIA

Whereas it has always been Our desire to abolish the institution of slavery in Our Empire;

And Whereas by Our Proclamations of the 22nd day of Megabit 1916 and the 8th day of Hamlie 1923, We proclaimed that all slaves who wished to be free could become free by asserting their freedom before a Judge;

And Whereas We further provided for the punishment of persons who bought and sold slaves or who sought to prevent slaves from asserting their freedom;

Now therefore We desire to provide for the abolition of the legal status of slavery throughout Our Empire,

And We proclaim as follows:

1. This Proclamation may be cited as the Slavery (Abolition) Proclamation, 1942.

2. In this Proclamation, unless the context otherwise requires:

'Slave' means a person whose condition is that of slavery;

'Slavery' is the condition or status of a person over whom any or all the rights attaching to the right of ownership are exercised;

'Slave dealing' includes any act of capture, acquisition or delivery to another of a person with a view to reducing him to a state of slavery; any act of acquisition of a slave with a view to selling or exchanging him, any act of delivery to another by sale or exchange of a slave who was acquired with a view to being sold or exchanged, and generally any act of trading in or transporting slaves.

'Legal status' means a status recognized by law.

3. The legal status of slavery is abolished.

4. Any person who:

- (i) Transports or assists in transporting a person out of Our Empire in order that he may be sold as a slave; or
- (ii) Engages in slave-dealing, or assists or in any way helps a person thus engaged;

is guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction:

- (a) To be sentenced to death; or
- (b) To imprisonment for a term not exceeding 20 years or to a fine not exceeding Maria Theresa dollars 10,000 or to corporal punishment not exceeding 40 lashes or to any combination of these penalties.

5. Any person who prevents or attempts to prevent any slave from asserting his freedom, or recaptures or attempts to recapture any slave who has asserted his freedom, shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to imprisonment for a period not exceeding 5 years or to a fine not exceeding Maria Theresa dollars 1,000 or to both such imprisonment and fine.

6. Any person who transfers or receives any other person as a pledge or security for a debt shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable on conviction to imprisonment for a period not exceeding 2 years or to a fine not exceeding Maria Theresa dollars 500 or to both such imprisonment and fine.

7. The provisions of Our Proclamations of the 22nd day of Megabit 1916 and the 8th day of Hamlie 1923 are hereby re-enacted in so far as they are not inconsistent with the provisions of this Proclamation.

*Done at Addis Ababa this 26th day of August 1942.*

TSAHAFE TEZAZ WELDE GUIORGUIS.

*Minister of the Pen.*

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